THE
MESSAGE OF MOHAMMED

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THE MESSAGE OF MOHAMMED

BY

ARDASER SORABJEE N WADIA, M A

Sometime Professor of English and History Elphinstone College Bombay Dakshina Fellow in Natural Science

WITH

FRONTISPIECE BY E J SULLIVAN A R W S

This day have I delivered My *Message* and fulfilled My Mission I have left amongst you a plain command to wit the Book of God and manifest Ordinances of which if ye take fast hold ye shall never go astray —*Last Sermon*

1923

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"The Prophets are the products of the spiritual necessities of their age, and are no mere accidents nor their lives mere unconnected episodes in the history of the world."

Carlyle

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"We do not think that either Mohammed or any of his Eastern predecessors has spoken the last word on the question of prophetic religion but, on the other hand, we are becoming prepared to recognise that the Man of Mecca really heard a Divine Voice and exercised a Divine Commission"

E V Arnold

EPISTLE DEDICATORY

To

The Muslims of India

Islam is a prophet's cry, Semitic to the core, yet of a meaning so universal and so timely that all the voices of the age take it up, willing or unwilling, and it echoes over palaces and deserts, over cities and empires, first kindling its chosen hearts to world-conquest, then gathering itself up into a reconstructive force that all the creative light of Greece and Asia might penetrate the heavy gloom of Christian Europe, when Christianity was but the Queen of Night "

Johnson

EPISTLE DEDICATORY

MY FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN,

Perhaps the most significant and certainly the least expected of the many changes which the vast upheaval of the late war brought in its train was—the Awakening of Islam. In that Awakening no people took a more prominent part nor any toiled more to maintain the honour, integrity, and independence of Islam and demand fair play and justice for her than the Muslims of India. To whom, therefore, could this book of mine be more fittingly dedicated than to those who have so worthily upheld the cause which is its own subject-matter of discussion?

Long ago Reland observed that "no religion had been more calumniated than Islam." That observation of Reland is as true to-day as on the day it was made. And the greatest offenders in this direction, as might well be guessed, are the Christian expounders of Islam. Even those of them who, like Sir William Muir and Washington Irving, have approached their subject with the avowed intention of being scrupulously fair and just, have invariably ended with a veiled traducement of Islam and of its great Founder—a traducement which by its insinuations and innuendoes have done more harm and greater

injustice to both than open and sweeping condemnations of their declared enemies like Koelle and Forster

And there will or can be no abatement of the complaint to which Reland gave voice until the Christian Critic, giving up for once his superior ways and patronising attitude towards Islam, goes to it in a truly and really sympathetic vein, following the method and manner of St Paul as described in his famous First Epistle to the Corinthians

"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more

"And unto the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews, to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law,

"To them that are without law as without law, that I might gain them that are without law

"To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some"

If we replaced the word "gain" in the above texts by the word "understand," it would reveal to us the right spirit in which matters religious ought to be approached to get at their basic truth and extract permanent values out of them Anyhow this is the spirit in which I went to my task, and it was in this spirit I wrote out the Message Consequently, for the contents of the following pages I lay no claim "to novelty of fact nor to profundity of research," but only to the fact that "though I be free from all men,

yet did I for the time being make myself servant unto the Prophet of Islam and became as a Believer of his Creed, that I might gain the Prophet and understand his Creed"

But it is not enough to get at the basic truth of a religion or extract permanent values out of it, for a religion, like all terrestrial things, waxes old with the passage of time. And your religion, Muslims of India, is no exception to this general rule which time enforces on all things that be. The obvious way, therefore, of meeting the ravages of time in the matter of religion is to infuse new life into it in consonance with the life around. To accomplish this at all successfully the sheer mechanical enforcement of the Prophet's commands and enjoinments, the mere otiose observance of his rules and regulations will have to be replaced by something approaching a more living and willing adoption of them as a warning from the past acting as an inspiration for the future In other words, we must recast old beliefs and revaluate past traditions and transfigure them into breathing, palpitating realities that have an inward significance and immediate application to life as we see around us.

You, my fellow-countrymen, are the heirs of all the ages if you will but accept your inheritance! And you can be true and worthy leaders of Moslem thought in all Islamic lands if you will but learn to study your great Faith for yourselves and, overcoming the mental inertia of taking your beliefs ready-made, think out your

religion for yourselves and form concepts and cherish convictions which, while illuminating the abiding meaning of life, have a more vital, present-day significance Only on this condition will Islam become a truly inward possession of vast potentiality and present use to you in the day-to-day fulfilment of the purposes of your existence Here and in laying, stone by stone, "the basements and foundation-rooms" of the life Beyond More, on this condition only will you be able to retain and preserve intact the massive simplicity, the wonderful adaptability, and the innate, inalienable, and impellent freemasonry of Islam

A S WADIA

"WOODLANDS," CHEMBUR, BOMBAY,
January 1, 1923

P S TO EPISTLE DEDICATORY

SINCE writing the above Epistle Dedicatory, I received from Mr E J Sullivan the drawing he had undertaken to do for the *Message* and which now appears as a frontispiece in the book A glance at the picture will disclose something so strikingly unusual about Mohammed's profile and expression that my Moslem readers, unless they are artists, will be sorely tried to reconcile their own fair conception of their Prophet's face with the one delineated by Mr. Sullivan in the photo-

gravure. It would be a pity if Mr. Sullivan's art was on that score misunderstood by them. I therefore feel the necessity of adding a line here in explanation. I would, in the first instance, ask the Moslem reader to defer judgment while he joined me in making a little experiment. To commence then, let the reader imagine the face of the Prophet at the age of twenty-five, the noblest and handsomest he could conceive of —with smooth skin and creaseless brow, a beard full and flowing, and features moulded after the most approved classical model On this fine faultless face of twenty-five, let deep meditation, hard climate, and inexorable time leave, year in and year out, their indelible impress, and at the end of fifteen years the handsomest face in the world will have lost much of its youthful bloom and look a little pinched and hard-pressed Then let this face somewhat pinched and hard-pressed undergo a month of acute spiritual and mental struggle intensified by long fasts and longer vigils —such as few men are ever called upon to undergo, and it would indeed be a matter of surprise if the resulting face in any one instance differed radically or even materially from Mr Sullivan's conception of it There is, besides, a leading point in that conception which demands special notice here That great art-critic Ruskin has somewhere said that there are three ways in which an artist can draw a man's face. One in which the mere accuracy of features is aimed at, another in which an attempt is made to catch a

leading trait or a select aspect of the face, and the third in which no thought is given to features nor even to select aspects of the face, but to that particular expression which the man wore "in the most excited instant of his life, when all his secret passions and all his highest powers were brought into play at once—an instant when the call and claim of some divine motive had brought into visible being those latent forces and feelings which the spirit's own volition could not summon nor its consciousness comprehend, which God only knew and God alone could awaken" It is this one supreme moment in the Prophet's life which Mr Sullivan has attempted to seize and portray in his drawing—a moment when all that lay submerged and struggling in the inmost depths of Mohammed's soul welled up of a sudden on his face at beholding in the intense darkness of the cavern a celestial being bearing him a Message from on High.

A S W

THE STRUGGLE OF MOHAMMED

"The early struggles of a heroic soul, the tentative work of its later years, the period in which it feels the strange stirrings of its powers, yet sees no arena for their play, and its final emergement from uncertainty into the one definite, infinite line of life—all these movements and their consequences can never be studied in vain"

Marshall Mather

CHAPTER I

THE STRUGGLE OF MOHAMMED

MAN, it is said, is a creature of circumstance. No saying is truer than this, and yet there is none more false This dual aspect of the saying is in no case better exemplified than in that of the great Prophet of Arabia For his life and teachings are in many aspects the direct outcome as in many others in total contradiction of his circumstances Nevertheless, circumstances in a very real sense hold the key to the right understanding of the religion of Mohammed and, consequently, no study of Mohammedanism ought truly to commence without a preliminary inquiry into the nature and condition of the country in which Mohammed was born and the people among whom he lived, moved, toiled and ended his days

The country of the Prophet's birth was not of the kind and character with which most of us are ordinarily familiar—a country composed of towns and villages, teeming with life and vegetation, art and industry, with extended stretches of land traversed by roads and rivers and interspersed with wooded hills and verdant valleys The country was not of this description, nor anything approaching it. But it was a land of

arid waste and sandy desolation, where water and verdure were things unknown and where the blazing sun parched up and crumbled everything into particles of sand by day, and by night the cutting winds carried on the never-ceasing work of destruction by spreading over all a thicker and ever thicker shroud of sand which lay everywhere heavy and inert like a veritable mantle of forgetfulness. However, in this grim picture of a dead, rainless world nature introduced a few touches of life and colour—here by oases of pools of sparkling water and clusters of date-palms, and there by the shifting tents of wandering Bedouins or by the more permanent habitations of settled Arabs.

This strange land of silence and solitude was inhabited by a type of humanity equally strange. The Arabs, being the children of the desert, developed qualities very much in keeping with their wild, arid surroundings. They were a hard, tough race of men who, being unused to gentler modes of life and thought, knew no mercy and no compassion. Though habitually slow of speech and action, when once their feelings were roused they were swift to return an insult or an injury, and their blood-feuds were often continued from generation to generation. Thus, while sedulously nurturing in their hearts these vindictive feelings they, strangely enough, were carried away by extravagant, almost quixotic notions of hospitality which, as in the other case, often overstepped the bounds of reason and good sense. For instance,

an Arab thought little of killing his last goat or sheep to entertain his guests, and would sooner have his son murdered than let a hair of his worst enemy be touched while he was resting under his roof.

This wild and lawless people had, besides, a regular passion for poetry, and their passion was such that not a fair was held but had its poetical contests. At these gatherings there came from all parts of the great continent the votaries of that fickle muse, and when they had recited their varied compositions, those judged best were then transcribed on silk in letters of gold and hung up in their national shrine.

Isolated from the great nations of the world, the Arabs lived their little lives and slept their long sleep unaffected by the wars and polity, ambitions and cupidity of other people. The armies of the Cæsars and the Chosroes had for centuries marched and re-marched on their frontiers without affecting their elemental sloth, and often in the wake of the caravans great ideas filtered through the desert-sands to their distant ears but left undisturbed their profound slumber of ages. These ancient people were divided into tribes. Each tribe was independent and had a chief of its own who ruled because he was the bravest and wisest of them all and best fitted to lead and guide them. Few Arabs had settled occupations. The Bedouins led a wandering pastoral life, while the rest were employed in some kind of commercial pursuit mostly in

connection with the caravans that crossed and re-crossed their desert country One such centre of the commercial activity was the city of the Prophet's birth—Mecca

Mecca is one of the oldest cities in the world and in a sense the most interesting of them all. Old histories and deathless traditions seem still to haunt its paved ways and crumbling walls to an extent unknown in the case of other cities of equal fame and age It is to this day an important centre for the caravans bringing their rich merchandise from the north and the south as in the days of Jacob and of "the kings of Arabia and Saba" we read of in the Psalms It still possesses, fresh and limpid, the spring of Zem-Zem which tradition associates with the wanderings of Hagar and Ishmael, and the world-renowned *Kaabh* with the mysterious Black Stone is to-day as much the most ancient and sacred object of reverence as it was in the days of Abraham and Diodorus Siculus Here in this fane of ancient renown were ranged the three hundred and sixty idols round the great god Hobal, carved of red agate, with his two *ghassâlas*, stags of gold and silver, and the images of Abraham—that "Saturnian father of the tribes"—and of his son Here came the tribes, year after year, to kiss the Black Stone which had fallen from heaven in the primeval days of Adam, and here they stripped themselves to make the seven circuits of the temple naked.

Thus, from the remotest antiquity Mecca was

not only the meeting-point of all the religious thought and fervour of the Arabs, but also the great emporium for the industrial output and commercial enterprises of the neighbouring nations For from Mecca irradiated the caravans which carried to the Byzantine dominions and to Imperial Persia the rich and rare products of Yemen and of the far-off Ind, and returned therefrom laden with the still richer silks and rarer stuffs of Syria and of the Persian cities. Their commercial activities unfortunately were not confined to mere articles of trade, but extended to other goods of more doubtful enterprise and utility For in the train of these caravans came the slave-girls of Greece and Persia with their unfailing concomitants—Wine and Song, and these beguiled the idle hours and ministered to the lower instincts of the citizens, both rich and otherwise The Meccans, in consequence, and in a lesser degree the Arabs as a class, were irreclaimably addicted to drinking and gambling, and became inordinately fond of music and dancing, and so fell an easy prey to the immoralities and dissoluteness that generally follow in the wake of these pursuits For instance, the professional dancing-girls, *kayna* as they were called, whose ministration to the lewd tastes of men was, as in other Eastern countries, a thing of common notoriety, were held in high esteem, and the greatest chiefs thought nothing of paying court to them in public. Rank polygamy, moreover, prevailed everywhere, and it was left to

the sweet will of a man to have as many women as he chose for his wives. The women, in consequence, were looked upon as mere chattels in a man's household, and at his demise his widows —other than the mother—became a part of the patrimony, and as such passed into the use of the son and as if to give a finishing touch to the singular practices of these people came the horrible custom of burying alive infant girls

It was in a society of people given to such strange ideas and practices of life and in a country so markedly different in its physical aspect and so very deficient in the prime necessities of existence that the Prophet was born and brought up, lived his chequered life, and delivered his immortal message His chequered life up to a certain stage recapitulates in a way the whole course of human progress itself No sooner was he born than he was, as was the custom in Mecca, handed over to the care of Bedouin women Consequently, for the first five years of his life he had, so to say, a free run of the vast stretches of the open desert and retained all his life a strong recollection of the wild free wandering existence he led there For the next seven years he was destined to lead a life of an entirely different character Being left an orphan and having inherited but little from his father, it became necessary for him to earn his living He was for that reason turned into a little shepherd and was, in consequence, compelled to pass seven long years of his boyhood within the narrow precincts

of Mecca. But the same barren hills of Mecca which in those years so closely walled in his physical activities could not shut out his growing mind from indulging in incipient meditation and his expanding imagination from roaming over their limiting contours into the vast spaces beyond And he was not left long to imagine those vast expanses beyond, for when he was about twelve, Abu Talib, his uncle, who was an enterprising merchant, projected a caravan to visit Bostra in Syria, and no arguments of age and hardship on his part could keep back his equally enterprising nephew from joining it It was on this journey that he for the first time came in living contact with different modes of life and opposing ideas of religion, and the scenes of social misery and religious corruption that he observed there made a lasting impression on his young mind In his old age he often recalled those scenes, which, however, provided him with ample food for thought and speculation for the next twelve years he was fated to pass once more within the encircling hills of Mecca

In the twenty-fifth year of his life, a chance of leading a commercial mission and revisiting the scenes of his early travels came again his way and he eagerly seized it So successfully and with such scrupulous fidelity did he carry out the objects of the mission entrusted to him that his companions named him *Al-Amin*, the faithful, and the rich widow, who had sent him out on the expedition, set a seal of her approval of

this high opinion by inviting him to her home and offering him her hand and her heart. Though fifteen years his senior, she was exceptionally well-preserved and remarkably good-looking, and in spite of this great disparity of age, for all the twenty-five years of their married life no couple in Mecca was happier or more single-mindedly devoted to one another than Khadijah and her youthful husband She seems to have early understood Mohammed's true and generous nature and faithfully shared all his varied trials and endless struggles as only a woman and wife could To Mohammed the marriage brought, besides a loving woman's heart, that leisure, quiet, and exemption from daily toil which he needed to prepare himself and his mind for the great work which lay before him and of which he was then not in the least bit conscious

He was, of course, conscious of the great shortcomings of his people and their really pitiable helplessness in every direction, and knew well that things as he saw around him could not for certain continue long He knew, for instance, that the petty quarrels and sectional jealousies which embittered feelings and split the tribes and townships of Arabia into so many hostile camps must somehow cease and the debasing rites and gross superstitions of rival creeds and sects must, sooner or later, be given up But that he was designed by Nature to be the instrument for carrying out her secret project and bringing about the great reform he was far from being conscious.

And yet so completely was he absorbed in the preparation of the work which unknown to him awaited him, and in such entire seclusion did he pass his days, that we hear of him but once in the course of the next fifteen years And that was when at the rebuilding of the *Kaabh* he was called upon to settle the dispute as to which of the Mecca clans had the right of replacing the sacred Stone. The ingenious way he settled the point in dispute to the satisfaction of all parties concerned should have at once marked him out in the eyes of his fellow-citizens as a man of great resourcefulness and commanding intellect with deep understanding of men and matters But with that proverbial blindness of human beings to incipient greatness and intellectual worth, the Meccans after having had the Stone replaced with perfect unconcern went their way, and with equal unconcern Mohammed went his

And his way lay once more towards the grim rocks of Mount Hira, there to meditate and find some solution of the problems that obsessed his soul and emaciated his body Those were the same old eternal problems about the mystery of the Creation and the purposes of Existence that have ever weighed down the body and worn out the spirit of those rare silent souls who can never bring themselves to walk in empty formulas nor dwell in the shews of things He wanted the rocks of Hira to tell him—Whence he had come, Why and for What he was there, and Whither he was bound? But the rocks stood dumb and answered

him not! Many a night he spent under the blue vault of heaven and asked of its myriad eyes as to who made them, but those myriad eyes merely twinkled and the great heaven rolled silently overhead and heeded him not And yet all the while the great Reality stood glaring upon him and seemed almost to be vocal in its very silence In circumstances like these a man of less buoyant temperament would have long lost heart and after repeated failures of fifteen years given up the Quest as vain and unprofitable But Mohammed was made of different and sterner stuff and failures, in consequence, seemed only to spur him on and give a keener edge to his quest and, in consequence, he pursued the objects of his life more vigorously and more determinedly than ever Especially was this the case during the month of Ramazan when each year he betook himself to his favourite cave on Mount Hira for days and nights together, there to fast and pray for the illumination But the illumination never came!

On one occasion, however, after passing an unusually peaceful evening of quiet meditation, as Mohammed lay wrapped in his mantle between the silent watches of the night, he heard or seemed to hear a Voice calling upon him Uncovering his head he peered in the impenetrable gloom around him, when, lo, he beheld in the distance a luminous point of light which as it approached him took shape and formed itself into a heavenly figure holding a long scroll

between its outstretched arms. "Read!" commanded the mysterious being, holding out the scroll to him. "But I cannot read," protested Mohammed Three times the mystic figure commanded and three times Mohammed protested, when of a sudden by some secret process he seemed to decipher the contents of the scroll and to scan those famous verses proclaiming the greatness of the Lord who hath made man and created all things In that one tense moment of fully-awakened consciousness he seemed to have touched the secret spring of life and solved the eternal problem of existence.

But that moment was only of short duration! For reaction soon set in and he again became as restless and as distracted as ever, and even doubted if after all he had really received a divine revelation or was it that some evil spirit, taking advantage of his long fast and overwrought feelings, had played a mean trick upon him? As was his wont he hurried to his ever-faithful Khadijah and apprised her of his strange experience and his fears, and she, with her never-wavering faith in him and his great destiny, unhesitatingly replied

"God is my protection, O Abu'l-Kasim He will not surely let such a thing happen unto thee, for thou speakest the truth, dost not return evil for evil, keepest faith, art of a good life, and kind to thy relations and friends And neither art thou a babbler in the market-place Rejoice, therefore, O dear husband, and be of good cheer! He in whose hands stands Khadijah's life is my witness that thou wilt be the Prophet of His people."

As events proved, Khadijah with her true womanly instinct saw deeper into the future than Mohammed with all his penetrating intellect and wider grasp of things But her deep faith in him and all her tender love for him did not help Mohammed to get over the doubts and misgivings that had taken possession of his mind. In her great anxiety for his growing melancholy, Khadijah sought the help and counsel of her cousin Waraka, who, though old and blind, was deeply versed in the scriptures of the Jews and of the Christians The old man calmed her anxieties, and subsequently when he met Mohammed in the streets he drew him aside and told him what he himself thought of his vision

"Verily, the *Nâmûs-i-Akbar*,[1] O Abu'l-Kasim, has come to thee—the same who came to Moses! They will, to be sure, call thee a liar They will persecute thee Nay more, they will banish and fight against thee But be of brave heart, O Abu'l-Kasim! Would that I could live to those days that I could fight for thee!"

The enthusiasm of the blind old tottering figure touched Mohammed to the quick, and his words of hope and trust brought for a while comfort to his troubled spirit But it was only for a while Once again he was a helpless victim of spiritual throes and his mind was being alternately torn between nameless hopes and baseless fears and to such an extent that often on his lonely vigils on Mount Hira he was tempted to

[1] The Message of the Almighty

hurl himself down from one of its steep crags into the abyss below and thus end once and for ever his seemingly endless struggle. But an invisible hand seemed ever to hold him back, and a voice seemed to issue from the very stones and rocks around, calling upon him to desist and urging him to fulfil the mission that lay before him What, however, that mission was, no hand came to point out, nor any voice to proclaim or even to suggest Being thus unable to put an end to his existence, he endured as best he could that horrible mental torture that comes of divided will and unstable convictions

For three long years that state of solitary suffering and mental torture continued uninterruptedly, till one evening the same mystical figure that had wakened him from his trance at his first initiation once again stood before him and read aloud the message it was charged to deliver to him

> "O thou, ENWRAPPED in thy mantle!
> Arise and Preach!
> Thy Lord—magnify Him!
> Thy raiment—purify it!
> The abomination—flee it!
> And bestow not favours,
> That thou mayest receive again with increase,
> And for thy Lord wait thou patiently
> For when the trumpet shall sound
> Verily, that day shall be a day
> Of distress and uneasiness unto the infidels!"

These visions of Mohammed are rather a difficult subject to tackle. One does not know what exactly

to make of them Were they real visions? Or were they mere hallucinations of a mind distraught and prone to epilepsy? Or, worse still, were they mere pious elaborations on the part of his multitudinous chroniclers lavishly endowed with imagination and not overburdened with scruples about truth and reality? On subjects like these it is best to have an open mind But whichever side we might be disposed to lean through force of temperament or insurmountable prepossessions, there is no gainsaying the fact that these two visions, whether hallucinations or pure delusions, burnt deep into Mohammed's mind and memory, and so deeply that his whole soul was set aflame by them and his entire outlook on life was changed for him After the second vision he no longer went about sullen and morose with hesitating steps and care-worn face, betraying distrust alike of himself and of the Power that sent him, but moved like one who was in complete possession of himself and bent intently on an errand of great moment to his people In other words, with the reception of the second vision ended the Struggle of Mohammed

THE ALLAH OF MOHAMMED

"Whatsoever your mind can conceive,
That Allah is not, you may well believe"

Jellaluddin Rumi

CHAPTER II

THE ALLAH OF MOHAMMED

It is possible that the reader, who is conversant with the life and career of the Prophet, will have read with surprise the statement I make at the close of the foregoing chapter that the struggle of the Prophet's life really ended when he had received the second vision. He would probably maintain that the most anxious and vexatious period of his life really commenced with that vision, inasmuch as the ridicule and persecution, the virulent opposition and ultimate banishment which old Waraka had predicted, did not overtake the Prophet till after this memorable event in his life In fact, some of the leading chroniclers of Mohammed's life consider the ten years following this call to "Arise and Preach" as the most remarkable period of his whole career, since during those dreary long years of waiting not only were his powers of endurance and forbearance put to a severe test, but—apart from his own abiding faith in the vision he had seen and the call he had heard, and the loyal support that Khadijah unfailingly gave him,—there was nothing to sustain him in his great purpose and endeavour

Such a view, I admit, is largely true, and I would have had no hesitation in accepting the reader's contention in this direction, were we discussing the life and career of an individual of brilliant parts and attainments or even of a man of extraordinary talents and character. But Mohammed, truly speaking, was neither. Though sternly practical and eminently tactful, Mohammed was essentially a man of ideas and dreams. With such men the struggle of life lies not with the world without but with the world within them. The battle of their life is the one incessant fight they have to put up at certain stages of their spiritual evolution against the inner demons of doubt and distrust, disorder and despair. Once these demons are laid low, and the soul has secured its footing, it faces with comparative equanimity the ridicule and persecution of the great outer world, the conquest of which is then a mere matter of time and patience. The reason is that the slow, silent forces unchained from the abysmal depths of a single superior human being, no matter how thwarted and nullified at first, must unfailingly work their way through the chequered passage of time and come eventually to rule the mind and impulse of humanity at large. I believe, therefore, that the period during which Mohammed underwent the most crucial test of his life was the one which preceded the advent of the second vision.

That crucial test having once been passed, the way lay straight before him, littered though it

was with obstacles formidable enough to have quailed the stoutest heart not so firmly fixed in faith as Mohammed's was The two visions granted to him, however, gave him a good start. For one thing, they taught him that the aim of human existence should be the Quest of the Absolute, the goal of human ambition to Realise Him, and the end of human endeavour to Glorify Him, first by securing a complete mastery over one's own self and then by utilising the disciplined energies thus liberated in the service of one's fellow-men That Mohammed may carry out this divinely-appointed task, it was essential that he should in the first place be acquainted with the fundamental nature of the Eternal Himself And as if in response to that vital need of his, came the famous *sura*, which is in a way the key of the Koran and the central theme of Mohammed's message to mankind

> Say He is God one and alone,
> God the Eternal,
> He begetteth not, and He is not begotten,
> And there is not one like unto Him

The famous *Kalimct*[1] was but the great *sura* condensed for the practical needs of daily life The perfect and absolute Unity of the Eternal was the keynote of the Prophet's first ministry as it was the burden of his last sermon. In a

[1] *La ilaha illa Allah, Mohammed rasul Allah*—There is no object of worship but God and Mohammed is the Messenger of God

hundred different ways he taught that fundamental article of his faith, and on a thousand different occasions he recited and reiterated that magic formula, which being rubbed into the bones of his immediate disciples, now circulates in the blood of hundreds of millions of his followers all over the world Yet this leading tenet of Islam, which now courses in the vein of every Moslem alive and which finds a ready response even from those who are outside the Prophet's fold, was when first proclaimed openly derided and summarily rejected by the very people for whom it was primarily intended so totally and so hopelessly were the Meccans in the grip of their three hundred and sixty timber idols presided over by the red agate Hobal, with his lieutenants —the two stags of gold and silver

To a large number of thinking minds Idolatry in any shape or form is hateful—a thing demeaning and demoralising To Mohammed it simply spelt death—death of all that ennobles man and lends distinction and meaning to his life Yet Idolatry, like other things of the mind and created matter, is not bad in itself On the contrary, in one of its forms, known as Fetishism, it plays quite an important, nay an indispensable part in the evolution of rational creatures It then, far from demeaning human nature, actually elevates it by distinguishing it from brute nature Consider what would be our dusky brother of Central Africa without his Mumbo-Jumbo? And how would we know our Bonnie Cannibals of the

Malay Isles from the man-apes around them, were they deprived of their Totems and Jotems? Idolatry, therefore, is not to be condemned as such In fact, Idolatry, taken in its more literal sense, is a kind of symbology [1] And symbols in one shape or another we all vitally need, both high and low Anyhow, whether recognised as such or not, we are encompassed by them, and consciously or unconsciously we are making and remaking them every day of our lives Not a line we write but is a visible imprint of an invisible idea, nor a thing we devise but is a tangible token of an intangible conception Consequently idols—so long as they stand for and visualise real definite ideas, in other words, become the embodiments and revelations of invisible realities—serve a useful and necessary purpose in the economy of nature and, as such, cannot be condemned But when idols have abdicated this vital function of theirs and embody nothing but the wood and stone of which they are made, then it is that they become mischievous, and degrade and demoralise their simple - minded votaries The three hundred and sixty idols of Mecca once stood for ideas that were real and definite, but with the passage of time and consequent evolution of the Arab mind they gradually came to lose most of their pristine spiritual value, till at the time of Mohammed's birth they were reduced to such gilded, soulless anachronisms in

[1] *Eidolon*, a thing seen and *latreuein*, worship.

timber and bee's wax that they served no real religious purpose nor performed any vital function at all Before long they would assuredly have fallen through sheer neglect and decay, were they not outwardly patched and propped up by the superstitious awe of the untutored Arabs and the interested zeal of the mercenary Meccans.

Mohammed's keen eye had long taken note of the intolerable state of things around him and his soul burned to put an end to these degrading scenes of gross superstition and triumphant hypocrisy But being one among a million to feel as he did, he was rather diffident and fully realised his helplessness to remedy the evil However, when the visions came, strange power seemed to come with them and fill his body and mind with unwonted vigour and enthusiasm Indeed, such an accession of strength and spirit had he received from them that not long after their coming he felt himself strong enough to stand up for his own convictions and defy the combined might of the hypocritical Koreish and the superstitious Arabs He, therefore, openly denounced the worship of the idols, held up to ridicule the fatuous ministrations of the Koreish hypocrites and exhorted the Arabs to mend their ways by giving up their evil practices and joining him in the worship and service of the one and only God—*Allāh-ta'-alāh* [1]

Such a bold and uncompromising proclamation of his own individual convictions naturally gave

[1] The Most High God

offence to everybody. "Who is this youth that presumes to preach to us as if we were mere children?" questioned the Elders of the Koreish, "Whence comes this sage that dares to rebuke us all as mere fools and worshippers of wood and stone?" For the peace and harmony of their little community the Elders thought it much the wiser course, before taking any definite step against the obstreperous spirit, to try and wean him from his folly and rashness by a little quiet advice administered to him by a man of ripe age and experience With that object in view they summoned Abu Talib and asked him to use his influence with his nephew and stop him from inciting the people to rash acts by his irresponsible preachings The aged patriarch, readily complying with their request, called his enthusiastic nephew to him and bespoke him to give up his presumptuous practice of preaching to the people on subjects on which he was still much too young to speak with any authority or even conviction "There is no harm in your holding what opinions you liked for yourself," concluded the good old man of caution and worldly prudence, "but you should not declare them openly to the populace" Mohammed, after saying how much he felt beholden to his uncle for his well-meant advice, made the famous reply

"Oh, my noble uncle, if the Elders brought the sun and the moon and placed them on my right and on my left to force me to give up my appointed task, verily

I would not yield unless the Lord Himself came and commanded me or I perished in the attempt "

That this was no vain effusion of a hot-headed enthusiast but the cool and deliberate resolution of a man of character and strong conviction the subsequent events only too conclusively proved From that resolution Mohammed never swerved nor did he ever regret having made it, though in the meantime he had to endure the pangs of utter isolation at home and submit stoically later on to a long and bitter exile which ended in his adopting a measure most hateful to him—namely, of waging war on his own people

But to the labours of the body as to the travails of the soul one day there assuredly comes a rich reward in the shape of the fulfilment of the purpose for which they were endured In the case of Mohammed that long-deferred day at last dawned in the sixtieth year of his life when he stood before the walls of Mecca with his small band of brave and faithful followers No army came out to oppose him and the city, which had made an outlaw of him and cast him out, was now at his mercy But all thoughts of revenge or punishment were instantly brushed aside, so great was the Prophet's love of his native city and such a compassion he felt for his old, erring fellow-citizens With feelings of deep reverence he entered the Holy City and went straight to the *Kaabh* and made the customary seven circuits of the sacred building And then struck the supreme hour of the Prophet's life,—the hour

for which he had panted from his earliest youth and to which he had sacrificed the best years of his manhood When he had completed the last of the seven circuits and all his disciples had hurriedly gathered round him, wondering what would follow next, Mohammed broke the tensity of their feelings by slowly advancing towards the giant figure of Hobal He significantly raised the staff he carried in his hand and pointed it to the figure and the next moment hundreds of his followers fell on it and smashed it to pieces. The turn of its three hundred and sixty companions came next and one by one they all toppled down, and when the last of the dumb brotherhood had crashed to the ground, the Prophet raised his hands to heaven and exclaimed "Truth is come at last and falsehood has fled away verily, falsehood is a fleeting thing" And in response the disciples rent the air with the shouts of—*Allah-o-Akbar!* The Meccans who were standing around, silently watching the proceedings, dared not move a step to save the gods of their fathers nor did they raise their voice in protest when Omar turned to the pictures of Abraham and the angels and scratched them off the walls in obedience to the Prophet's command And finally Bilal, that Ethiopian slave of the Prophet and the first and noblest of the *muezzins* of Islam, brought that eventful day to a close by calling the faithful to prayer.

From that Day of Deliverance to this the

beautiful chaunt of the muezzin's call[1] to prayer is heard across the domes and minarets of Mecca and to this day through the Holy City there resound in response public prayers in the same grand old words of the Prophet as of yore

> "Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds!
> The Merciful, the Compassionate!
> King of the Day of Fate
> Thee only do we worship, and to Thee do we cry for help
> Guide Thou us in the Path that is Straight,
> The path of those to whom Thy love is great,
> Not of those on whom is Hate,
> Nor of those who Deviate!"

Such an enthusiasm indeed did the Prophet's entry into Mecca kindle in the neighbourhood that great numbers of both sexes came to him during the succeeding days and voluntarily subscribed to the new faith by taking the oath of allegiance On these occasions every man while taking the oath placed his hand on that of the Prophet and repeated after him, word by word, the second or Great Pledge of Al-Akabah

> "We will not associate anything with God
> We will not steal, nor commit adultery nor fornication.
> We will not kill our children
> We will abstain from calumny and slander

[1] "God is great! God is great!
There is no object of worship but God,
And Mohammed is the Messenger of God
Come to prayers! Come to prayers!
Prayer is better than sleep!
So, arise, ye Faithful!
And come to prayers! Come to prayers!"

We will obey the Prophet in everything that is right:
And we will be faithful unto him,
And remember him in the hour of our victory and our defeat"

With the overthrow of idolatry in Mecca and the raising of the standard of Islam in that Holy City, the one great object of the Prophet's life was indeed accomplished. But it must not on that account be supposed that his mission to humanity was fulfilled or even that the training of his disciples was completed Idolatry had indeed been tracked down and rooted out of the heart of Arabia once and for ever, but that did not mean that simultaneously with the rooting out of the evil the worship of the one and only God was automatically enthroned in its place. One cause in particular worked against such a consummation being brought about And it was the idea of the godhead which was current among the neighbouring nations, who were the heirs of ancient civilisations and followers of religions long-established and widely-accepted Of these the principal were the Jews, the Christians, and the Mago-Zoroastrians Among them once prevailed pure monotheism as simple and as undefiled as Mohammed preached several centuries afterwards But with the passage of time and change of environment various foreign elements found a secret entrance and tainted the pristine purity of these monotheistic creeds. The consequence was that the Ahuramazda of the Gathas split up into the Hormusd and the Ahriman of the later Avestas,

and the Jehovah of Moses into the Lord and the Satan of the later Judaism, and the Father of Christ into "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost" of the Nicene Creed and Pauline Christianity. Mohammed knew that a similar catastrophe awaited his own ideas of the godhead and that sooner or later the secret canker of Magian-Mosaic duotheism or Paulo-Christian tritheism and other anthropomorphic and anthropopathic conceptions of the Deity would assuredly find an entrance and eat into the heart of his pure monotheism. So he seized every opportunity to caution his disciples and solemnly warned them against the danger and exhorted them—

"To worship God alone, and join not aught with Him in worship. The Jews say, 'Ezra is the son of God', and the Christians say, 'Christ is the son of God.' Such are the sayings in their mouths! They resemble the sayings of the infidels of old! May God resist them! How misguided are they! To follow their priests and their monks and take Jesus, son of Mary, for Lord beside God, though enjoined to worship one God only. There is no object of worship but God. Far from His glory be what they associate with Him. Fain would they extinguish the light of God with their mouths![1] Therefore, O ye people of the Book, beware how ye overstep the bounds of your religion! And of God, utter nothing but the truth! Verily, Christ Jesus, son of Mary, is only a prophet of God, and his Word which he conveyed unto Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Himself. Believe, therefore, in God and his Prophets, and say not 'There is a Trinity.' Forbear this! God is only One God. Christ, be it remembered, disdaineth not to be a servant of God.[2]

[1] Sura ix. 30–32. [2] Sura iv. 169–70.

They say, 'The God of Mercy hath begotten a Son' Now have they not uttered a monstrous thing?"[1]

According to Mohammed, Allah[2] is one and eternal, indivisible and indefinable, not endued with form nor circumscribed by limit, the First and the Last, the Outer and the Inner, without issue or similitude, comprehending all things but comprehended of nothing "God was not like any object that the human mind can conceive" said the great Caliph Ali, "no attribute can be ascribed to Him which bore the least resemblance to any quality of which human beings have perception from their knowledge of material objects.

He has no relation to place, time, or measure God is Mighty, because Power is His Essence, and Merciful, because Mercy is His Essence The conditions of time and space are wholly inapplicable to Him"

Such an absolutely omnipotent and purely spiritual conception of the godhead in all its grand and incommunicable oneness must of

[1] Sura xix 91

[2] The two principal names of God mentioned in the Koran are *Rabb* and *Allāh* In some thirty of the earlier *suras* the name *Rabb* alone is used Later *Allah* becomes the predominant name and it remains so, though for a time *Rahmān* is much used Moslem theology has rightly determined that Allah alone stands for the Divine Essence, while the rest are names of mere Divine attributes Allah is a contraction of *Al Ilāh* = The Deity, the article emphasises His uniqueness *Ilāh* corresponds to the Old Testament *Eloah*, the root of which is *El*, from *Ul* = to be strong Allah, therefore, signifies the Mighty One

necessity appear to certain types of men as cold and uncomforting, particularly to those who from their childhood have been brought up in the idea of God as a personal deity, as being almost a father, to whom all our concerns are objects of constant and immediate care. Personification of the Eternal in any shape or form being thus utterly repugnant to Mohammed, it is not surprising that to the Christian commentators of Islam, the Allah of Mohammed should appear unapproachable and unsatisfying—a mere chilling abstraction of a vast, eternal, infinite nomad. Palgrave, for instance, commenting on the Islamic conception of Allah, says:

"Thus immeasurably and eternally exalted above and dissimilar from all creatures which lie levelled before Him on one common plane of instrumentality and inertness, God is one in the totality of omnipotent and omnipresent action, which acknowledges no rule, standard or limit, save His own sole and absolute will. He communicates nothing to His creatures, for their seeming power and act ever remain His alone, and in return He receives nothing from them, for whatever they may be, that they are in Him, by Him and from Him only. ... One might at first sight think that this tremendous Autocrat, this uncontrolled and unsympathising Power would be far above anything like passions, desires or inclinations. Yet such is not the case!"[1]

That, indeed, is only too true! And this tirade of Palgrave's only goes to prove that the Christian critic's conception of Mohammed's Allah is ob-

[1] *Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia*, Vol. I, pp. 365-7.

viously faulty and unquestionably misleading. It is true that Mohammed's Allah bears no resemblance to any thing or being we know of nor does He have relationship, human or divine, with any thing or being we can think of; more, that Allah exists only in the pure region of the spirit which is above us, around us and within us. "No vision," says the Koran, "taketh Him, but He taketh in all vision and He is the Subtle, the All-informed."[1] That such a purely spiritual and wholly impersonal conception of the Universal Mind leaves no room, or ought to leave no room, for certain attributes, such as justice, mercy, truth, wisdom, love and compassion, that we generally associate with a personality, is equally true "How would you then explain," questions the reader, "Mohammed's associating with such a purely impersonal Reality certain attributes which fall within human categories?" By the fact that to Mohammed, justice, truth, mercy, love were no mere human attributes—which are the outcome of environment and prevailing ideas and the sport of chance and personal idiosyncracies — but pure qualities which have their reality and perfect expression only in the Absolute, and of which in our phenomenal world we perceive, if we perceive at all, mere broken fragments and countless dim reflections The Allah of Mohammed, consequently, is the Almighty, All-knowing, All-penetrating, All-just, All-wise, All-merciful, and All-compassionate Lord

[1] Sura vi. 103.

of the worlds, the Author of the heavens and the earth, and the Creator of life and death, in whom are all things that be or ever shall be, and without whom no creature of any kind could hold existence for a moment Saith the Koran

> "Verily, Allah it is who cleaves out the grain and the date-stone with Him are the keys of the secret things none knoweth them but He He knoweth whatever is in the land and in the sea and no leaf falleth but He knoweth it neither is there a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor a thing green or sere, but it is noted in His preserved tablet "[1]

As is well-known, there are ninety-nine *Asma's-sifāt* or divine attributes of which the most prominent and the most frequently recurring are *Ar-Rahman*, the Merciful, and *Ar-Rahim*, the Compassionate The mercy and compassion of the Eternal is one of the constantly-recurring themes, and in a sense, the most insistent note in the whole Koran In fact, there is scarcely a chapter but opens in the name of the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate, revealing that love, that divine mercy which enfolds all creation, and outside of which nothing created can survive an instant And yet, curiously enough, there are critics who in their perfervid zeal for their own religion think nothing of calling the God of Mohammed "a pitiless tyrant," "the tremendous Autocrat, uncontrolled and unsympathising," and his omnipotence "ruthless" and his creed as being "divorced of love"

[1] Sura vi 59

It may indeed be that it is a nobler conception of the Creator to represent Him as the very quintessence of Love, whose sole passion is one vast outpouring of Himself for the welfare and advancement of His creation and who sets no bound to His bounty save only those which our limitations create I admit this Christian conception of the Deity comes nearer to our heart's desire, and consequently makes a strong appeal to certain types of mind It certainly appeals to me But when we descend from the clouds and face the stern logic of facts as we find around us, we are apt to look askance at the comfortable creed of the Christians And then it is that we take shelter under Mohammed's more virile idea of God as being one vast all-enfolding Reality, indefinable and inconceivable, which carries out its own supreme purpose *not* regardless of human weal or woe but with the full and the most minute and loving consideration of them all, as One Day we shall know and fully realise

In Islam, it is said, God's law is not the expression of His moral nature but of His arbitrary will as evidenced by His oft-repeated phrase—"Allah misleadeth whom He will and whom He will He guideth" It is, moreover, contended that, if His words can be abrogated, as they have been in twenty instances, His commandments are subject to change, improvement and favouritism, and consequently, can have no absolute or permanent value of their own. I know the

question of "abrogated verses" is a difficult one and still remains one of the unsolved problems of Islamism But the other question of Allah's law being the outcome of His moral nature and arbitrary will is absurd in itself To such absurdity we are reduced when we try to pen in the Infinite within the attenuated fold of human categories and to judge divine acts from limited human outlook of things and by purely arbitrary and ever-shifting human standards

"God is not a larger man, viewing life from man's restricted standpoint and subject to the same limitations of feeling and action He is the life of all that is, the infinitely complex Reality that is finding manifestation in the world of worlds, present in every grain of dust as in the farthest star He cannot, therefore, be conditioned as we are, and His ways of behaving must be to a large extent incomprehensible to us Even the terms 'He,' 'His,' and 'Him,' as applied to deity are apt to become somewhat misleading They at once call up the idea of a person of the male sex, like ourselves but greater, wiser, better perhaps Let us get that out of our heads God is neither male nor female, and none of the other human qualities that depend upon earthly relationships can be exactly predicated of Him "

The reader will naturally suppose that the above quotation was from an Islamic source and was an Islamic conception of Allah It is neither It comes from a Christian source and is a celebrated Christian preacher's conception of the Eternal It is, in fact, R J. Campbell's conception of his Creator [1] It is, therefore, possible for

[1] *The War and the Soul*, pp 70–72

the most assiduous minister of Christ to get on common ground with the most bigoted maulana of Mohammed in their fundamental ideas of their Creator At all events, there is no gainsaying the fact that Mohammed's concept of Allah, in all its simple and incommunicable Oneness was infinitely exalted above the vain conceits men have hitherto formed concerning their Creator, and is such that, speaking personally, whenever I have thought on it, I have felt—

> "A Presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man
> A motion and a Spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things"

THE ISLAM OF MOHAMMED

"The Islam of Mohammed proclaimed a new faith, and yet a faith in which nothing was new"

E V Arnold

CHAPTER III

THE ISLAM OF MOHAMMED

THAT absolute omnipotence which Mohammed claimed for the Creator, necessarily connoted an equally absolute dependence of His Creation on Him There is no getting away from the plain logic of this conclusion And the Prophet never did On the contrary, in *sura* after *sura*, either directly or indirectly, he taught that Allah is the supreme judge and the sole arbiter of the purpose and destiny of his entire creation, human or otherwise Witness the following "By no means can aught befall us save what God hath destined"[1] again, "No leaf falleth but He knoweth it, neither is there a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor a thing green or sere, but it is marked down on the preserved tablet "[2] Then there is what is called the "proof-text" in *sura* lxxvi, 29–30 "This truly is a warning, and whoso willeth, taketh the way to his Lord, but will it ye shall *not*, unless Allah will it, for Allah is Knowing, Wise!" And, to cap all, there is the famous saying which is repeated at least in a dozen texts of the Koran "Allah misleadeth whom He will and whom He will He guideth" In fact, *Islam*, that great word of power and

[1] Sura ix 51. [2] Sura vi 59

magic, by which Mohammed's religion is known all over the world, at once emblemises and idealises this total dependence of the created on the Creator For Islam is primarily derived from the Arabic word *salm* or *salama*, which literally means to be absolutely tranquil, to feel perfectly safe, and by implication, to be at perfect peace with oneself and the rest of the world having done one's duty and paid up one's dues And the whole word, Islam, being evidently a contraction of *Allah-salam*, consequently means to be absolutely tranquil and feel perfectly safe in Allah, that is, to be at perfect peace with oneself and the rest of the world, having wholly and freely consigned oneself to the will and judgment of Allah Al Islam, therefore, is a creed which enjoins that its followers shall of their own reasoned belief and conviction leave the issue of each and every incident of their life entirely and unquestioningly in the hands of their Creator And those who freely subscribe to this creed and faithfully follow it through all the vicissitudes of their lives are, according to *sura* ii, 122, 125, 127 and 130, true *Muslims*

From the above it is evident that the fundamental idea which lies at the core of Islam is this absolute submission of one's self and of all that one holds dear in life to One Who enfolds all things that be, and without Whom no creature ever existed, nor ever will Towards this simple and sublime creed at one time or another of the world's history the leading minds of humanity

have always felt drawn Have not, for instance, men of science like Newton and Galileo, philosophers like Socrates and Bacon, conquerors like Cæsar and Napoleon, saints like Augustine and Aquinas, poets like Homer and Goethe in one way or another subscribed to it? And has not Christ himself proclaimed Islam when in the agony of that awful night at Gethsemane he fell on his face and prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless *not as I will, but as Thou wilt*"? This—"Not as I will, but as Thou wilt"—was not only the grand historic prefigurement of Islam but a prophetic anticipation of the greatest thing Islam had to teach to those whom she summoned to her service Well might Goethe exclaim, "If this be Islam, do we not all live in Islam!" and Carlyle take up the cry and affirm

> "I say this is the only true morality known A man is right and invincible, virtuous and on the road towards sure conquest, precisely while he joins himself to the great Law of the World, in spite of all superficial laws, temporary appearances, profit-and-loss calculations And his first chance of co-operating with it, or getting into the course of it, is to know with his whole soul that it *is*, that it is good, and alone good! This is the soul of Islam, and it is properly the soul of Christianity "[1]

And yet this cardinal article of Mohammed's faith, which Christ in the travail of his soul prefigured and to which some of the greatest minds of Christendom have repeatedly subscribed,

[1] *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, Lecture II

in so many words or by way of implication, as "the only true morality known," is held up to open ridicule and subjected to systematic denunciation by the modern critics of Islam Witness the following from Sir William Muir's *Selections*

"In Islam the relation of Allah to the world is such that not only all free-will but all freedom in the exercise of the intellect is preposterous God is so great and the character of His greatness is so pantheistically absolute that there is no room for the human All good and all evil come directly from Allah Hope perishes under the weight of His iron bondage and pessimism becomes the popular philosophy "[1]

Clarke goes one better and remarks

"Islam saw God but not man, saw the claims of Deity, but not the rights of humanity, saw authority but failed to see freedom—therefore hardened into despotism, stiffened into formalism, and sank into death "[2]

Palgrave goes still one better and observes

"No superiority, no distinction, no pre-eminence can be lawfully claimed in Islam by one creature over another in the utter equalisation of their unexceptional servitude and abasement All are alike tools of the one solitary Force, which employs them to crush or to benefit, to truth or to error, to honour or shame, to happiness or misery, quite independently of their individual fitness, deserts or advantage—and simply because He wills it and as He wills it "[3]

[1] *Selections from the Coran*, p 52

[2] *Ten Great Religions*, Vol II p 68.

[3] *Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia*, Vol I p 366

This obvious misrepresentation, or rather the indolent misinterpretation of Islam by Muir, Clarke, and Palgrave, one can easily understand and readily forgive as being the outcome of either their limited outlook on life or their great zeal for their own religion But what are we to think of expounders from among the ranks of the Faithful themselves, who, to placate the critics, are tempted to compromise with them on this, the most vital point of their faith? Take, for instance, that eminent jurist and brilliant exponent of Islamism, the Rt Hon. Syed Ameer Ali. "In order to form a just appreciation of the religion of Mohammed," remarks the learned judge, "it is necessary to understand aright the true significance of the word *Islâm*" No proposition could be truer, none more worthy of immediate acceptance! "*Salm* (*salama* in the first and fourth conjugations) means, in the first instance," continues the judge, "to be tranquil, at rest, to have done one's duty, to have paid up, *to be at perfect peace*, and, finally, to surrender oneself to Him with whom peace is made" A reader would be justified in inferring from the above that Mr Ameer Ali meant by "surrendering oneself to Him with whom peace is made" as a full, glad, and wholehearted surrender of one's own self and all one's affairs to Him of Whom one had sought one's peace and one's salvation Imagine, therefore, the reader's surprise when he is told immediately afterwards that "The word (Islâm) does not imply, as

is commonly supposed, absolute submission to God's will, but means, on the contrary, striving after righteousness"[1]

What are we to make of this open tergiversation, of this light-hearted word-juggling? The plain, blunt modern inquirers who are very definitely set upon a thorough analysis of the nature and growth of the Islamic creeds and ideas can have no patience with such timid shifting and undignified shuffling With brutal bluntness they are apt to ask "What is 'absolute' and what is 'non-absolute' submission to God's will?" Can there be any question of half-and-half in the intimate and sacred relations between God and Man? In this spiritual relationship, can there be any base bargaining, any miserable disputings about more submission or less submission to God's will? In other words, can we chop up our will and then haggle with God and say—"This much of our will shall be ours and that much of our will shall be Thine, do Thou agree"? If we wish to trust in Him and surrender our will and ourselves to Him, we must do it with a full heart, keeping back nothing and forming no reservations, mental or material This is the one sure lesson Islam has to teach the world This, at all events, is the Spirit of Islam

"If this be the spirit of Islam, is it not a spirit full of danger?" questions the reader "Have not certain weak-willed Moslems found

[1] *The Spirit of Islam*, pp 225, 226

in those fatal sayings, *Allah-kereen*[1] and *Allah-katib*[2] an easy covering for many a wrong they have done to their fellow-men? And is not *bukra-inshallah*[3] the secret cause of the present stagnation of the Mussulman communities all over the world?

I admit the force of the above argument I quite realise that such a creed if carried unintelligently to its logical sequence would kill all effort and ambition and eventually wear away the *morale* of a people On the other hand, it must be remembered, that, like truth, every creed has its attendant dangers, and there is not a creed or a truth that cannot be abused in a like manner And so it is that this great Islamic creed is not without its attendant dangers, nor can it lay claim, any more than any other of its sister creeds, to any special immunity from being abused Besides, let us not forget the old adage "The Devil can cite scripture for his uses," so also can a weak wayward creature, no matter what creed it professed, do when it suits its purpose This strange, inexplicable antinomy, which lies at the root of all great truths and creeds, is what makes their indiscriminate dissemination so dangerous at times Constituted as we are, such dangers and difficulties are unavoidable and have to be met and overcome as best we can For one thing we would not improve matters by trying to run away from them So

[1] It is the will of God [2] God decreed it
[3] To-morrow, if God wills it

it is no use arguing that "the word Islâm does *not* imply" what it does imply, and wholly implies, and implies nothing if not that—namely, absolute submission to God's will Nothing ruins a cause so much as any hesitancy displayed by its leading minds to stand by the logical outcome of their own beliefs and convictions Let the Moslems, therefore, remember that nothing is more calculated to betray Al Islam in the eyes of those outside its fold than such unworthy quibbling on the part of its foremost exponents and recognised authorities Possessing no settled convictions on this fundamental belief of their religion, they naturally dare not stand by its logical sequence and so must necessarily explain it away in a half-assertive, half-apologetic manner and what is worse, not wholly believing, all the while, even in their own explanations

The wiser course, therefore, is to accept the facts as they stand and face them as best we can. And what are the facts? That Islam has always implied and will ever continue to imply in the first resort and last—absolute submission to God's will in other words, the complete and spontaneous merging of the individual human will into the all-enfolding Divine will Saith the Prophet

"Verily, the true religion in the sight of God is Islam If any dispute with thee, then say I have resigned myself unto God, and he who followeth me doth the same " [1]

[1] Sura iii 17-18

This is the true implication of Islam; nothing more and nothing less As, on the one hand, we must boldly take our stand by the full contents of this implication, so also, on the other hand, must we studiously avoid all temptations of reading more into it than what it plainly lays claim to, and strenuously resist all attempts at importing extraneous matters into it by interested outsiders. For instance, Islam, kept within its strict bounds, does not uphold *jabr*[1] or blind, unresisting fatalism any more than it denounces *tafwiz* or free-will and absolute liberty, though in itself it is the natural and logical outcome of a belief in determinism or predestinarianism The Koran proclaims and repeatedly proclaims that the Future is fixed and determinate, settled and inevitable—just as fixed and determinate, settled and inevitable as the Past That, in fact, the Future is duly mapped out and permanently engraved on certain tablets in heaven called "Preserved Tables" This being the case, the path of wisdom for a rational creature lies along accepting without vain sorrows and idle wishes whatever befalls it as coming straight from its Creator above Whoever, therefore, approaches the ever-evolving mysterious scheme of things in this chastened mood of glad acceptance, and in that mood yields instant and unquestioning obedience to the will of the great unknown Organiser of the scheme, professes Islam in all truth and reality even though he may never

[1] Literally, it means *compulsion*

have known Islam nor ever heard of its name. When, however, a man formally professes his belief in this basic article of Mohammed's religion and then seeks the way of salvation (*Najāt*) by pledging himself to accept the six articles of faith (*Imān*) and carry out the injunctions (*Sharī'ah*) and practices (*Dīn*) enjoined by the Prophet in the Koran, he becomes a Moslem. And he remains a good Moslem and a worthy exponent of Islam so long as this surrender of his own will and judgment to the Supreme will and judgment is active, spontaneous and entire, and is backed by a sincere and steadfast resolution to keep to the way of salvation by holding fast to the articles of faith, and faithfully carrying out the religious practices and injunctions laid down by the Prophet. If, on the other hand, his submission to God's will and judgment is a mere weak and despairing acquiescence wrung out of him through abject fear and indolent helplessness, his taking to the way of salvation and his acceptance of the articles of faith a mere otiose, soulless conformity, and his carrying out of religious injunctions and practices a matter of dull, dead, mechanical routine, then obviously he is a bad Moslem and an unworthy exponent of Islam. It is the Moslem of this latter type who constantly bemoans his *kismet* and has *bukra-inshallah* ever on the tip of his tongue! And it is from the contents of mind and the conduct of life of such Moslems that the Christian critics have developed their theory that Islam is the leading exponent

and active propounder of the creed of Fatalism in the world.

If it were so, it is obvious that nowhere would we, or ought we to find a better exemplification of this creed of fatalism than in the life and activities of one who originated and propounded it—namely, of Mohammed himself Yet, what do we find in the recorded events of Mohammed's life? A buoyant childhood, an active boyhood; an enterprising period of youth, during which he took part in two commercial ventures necessitating long, wearisome journeys of months through the dreary, scorching deserts; a restless manhood given wholly to thinking out the deepest problems of life and destiny, involving an endless travail of the soul, and a protracted middle-age which commenced in comparative calm and ended in perhaps the most strenuous period of his life, made up of battles, sieges and expeditions Such a long and vigorous career, crossed and recrossed by the varied moods and tricks of fortune, does not not look like one given to mere passive acceptance of things as they are or to sheer indolent acquiescence in events as they happen, which Fatalism, rightly so called, presupposes and enforces. Rather it has the appearance of a career which believes in actively and courageously working out its destiny regardless of opposing forces and trusting solely and remaining absolutely resigned to the inscrutable will of God.

It was this spirit that carried the Prophet's

arms to victory at the battle of Badr and saved them on the disastrous field of Ohud, and it was the same spirit of courage and determination which helped to dig the trenches round Medinah when closely besieged, and which finally stood by him at the taking of Mecca Were he, on the contrary, led by the spirit of fatalism, he would have sat with folded hands at Badr, leaving to Allah and his followers to fight out his battles, and when the disaster of Ohud overtook him there would have been idle regrets and much heart-searching Instead, on that fatal day he, though wounded and bleeding, was as calm and composed as ever No vain sorrows and wishes took possession of him, and he took it all as one who knows that "we know nothing," that the worst disaster and cruellest happening are not what they seem to our eyes, and that those pledged to Islam have to receive whatsoever befalls them as part of God's training and say

> "Nothing can befall us except what God has destined for us and God is Knowing, Wise Therefore, it is good and wise, and on God let the Faithful trust!"

This is the Islam of Mohammed, pure and unalloyed! This is yet in its way, as Carlyle puts it, "the highest wisdom that Heaven has revealed to our Earth" [1] What is there in it to merit the sweeping condemnation of Muir, Clarke and Palgrave, or lead to the grossly unfair de-

[1] *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, Lecture II

ductions of Forster, Swemer and Koelle? Says the last-named.

"Now, as the saying is true, that the nature of a tree becomes known from the fruit it bears, so also we may be prepared, by what has hitherto passed in review before our eyes, to admit that the untold miseries and woes which the politico-religious amalgam of Islamism has, age after age, inflicted on mankind, as the pages of history testify, are really the outward and tangible manifestation of its true inward nature As such, they revert, in due proportion, to the prophet and author of the system, their indirect cause, and brand them both with the stigma of well-merited reprobation "[1]

Who that has read Hallam's *Middle Ages* will deny that the Church of Christ during those ages "shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind"? Would we, therefore, be justified in holding Christ responsible for the gross misuse of his name and system by his unregenerate followers, and in "branding them both with the stigma of well merited reprobation"? Such a line of argument, it is evident, is neither fair nor logical The Prophet and the products of his brain and spirit must be judged on their own merits and *not* by the use or misuse made of them by some external agency in his own or subsequent age Judged from this standard, the Islam of Mohammed will stand the test as well as any other religion, and in some of the intricate problems of existence better than most I know of For instance, is it really true that the primary object of life is

[1] *Mohammed and Mohammedanism*, p. 241.

to learn the one great lesson of—*trust in God*? To this momentous question Islam seems to furnish a living affirmation Again, is it really possible, here and now, in this mundane life of ours to live with Him above the clouds of doubt and care? To this again Islam gives the same emphatic answer Is it then the true function of evolution, as it is of religion, to teach us to breathe the rare atmosphere of these serene altitudes? To this, finally, Islam responds in the same decided tone as before If, then, the purpose of our earthly pilgrimage is to learn the great lesson of *trust in God* and the secret of evolution as of religion is to teach us *to live with Him above the clouds of doubt and care*, how is that lesson of life to be learnt and this secret of evolution to be charmed out of existence? By whatever method others may secure for themselves this *summum bonum* of life and evolution, for the devout Moslem there has always been, and there ever will be, one method, and only one, and that is, by seeking the Way of Salvation (*najāt*) by holding fast to the *Imān* of his Prophet, carrying out scrupulously his *Dīn* and obeying faithfully his *Sharīāt*

THE NAJĀT OF MOHAMMED

"And a man of the family of Pharaoh, who was a *Believer*, but hid his faith, said, 'O my people! follow me, into the right way will I guide you this present life is only a passing joy, but the life to come is the mansion that abideth How is it, my people, that I bid you to *najāt* (salvation), but that ye bid me to the fire?"

Sura xl 41, 42, 44

CHAPTER IV

THE NAJĂT OF MOHAMMED

ACCORDING to the Islamic theory of Creation, Man was created to serve wholly and solely his Creator and carry out His will alone Every man is originally good and sinless, but being born weak, his soul is liable to be influenced by sin and evil These latter entered the world solely through the instrumentality of *Iblis* or *Shaităn* Mohammed derived the idea of the last-named from the Satan of the later Judaism, an idea which the Jews themselves had inherited from the Persians during their Babylonian Captivity, for Satan is none other than the Ahriman of the later Avestas Mohammed's conception of the Evil One, however, differed fundamentally from its two progenitors, inasmuch as these last, though they did not hold conjointly with God equal sovereignty over the world, were yet represented as if they were independent of Him and did very much as they liked with those who fell under their sway The Iblis of Mohammed was, on the other hand, only one of the *Jinns* or demons, often spoken of as an angel who, it was said, was cast down from Paradise because he would not worship Adam The point, therefore, that needs to be particularly emphasised about

Mohammed's Iblis is that he is as much a creation of Allah as any other of His creations, and as such comes fully and immediately within the ambit of Divine omnipotence If in revenge of his own downfall, Iblis tempts Allah's other creatures and causes them to fall, he no doubt does so under the belief that he thereby thwarts and upsets the Divine plans, whereas in reality he is a mere tool in the hands of Allah performing his appointed task in the ultimate furtherance of the Divine purpose In other words, in the Islamic theory of Creation Iblis was very much like what Mephistopheles was in the Mediæval legends

> "A part of that great might
> That ever wills the wrong, but makes the right"

This Islamic conception of Evil and the necessary part it plays in the grand drama of humanity, the reader will have to grasp fully if he wishes to understand that famous verse which is repeated at least twenty times in the Koran and which has called forth the Christian critic's severest strictures and roused his worst feelings against Mohammed and his conception of Allah. As the reader will have guessed, the verse is

> "Allah misleadeth whom He will,
> And whom He will He guideth"

Or take the other two verses not so often quoted, but equally clear and precise on the point at issue

"When the infidels plotted against thee to keep thee prisoner, or kill thee, or banish thee,—they plotted,

ye think? Not they, but Allah plotted, and of all plotters Allah is the best "[1]

"This truly is a warning, and whoso willeth taketh the way of the Lord, but will it ye shall not unless Allah will it, for Allah is Knowing, Wise!"[2]

We do not much wonder that the critics have been unsparingly severe in their criticism of these verses For the verses, when wrenched out of their context and made to stand bold and staring as above, present a rather ungainly appearance. And what is worse, the Moslem expounders themselves make no effort whatever to explain their strict logical bearing and necessity in the Islamic theory of an all-comprehending omnipotent Divinity with the Evil Spirit as an indispensable instrument in His hands for the furtherance and ultimate fulfilment of the grand Scheme of Existence.

Such, then, is the theory of creation in Islam, with *Shaitān* active and full of temptations, and Man, though not of an evil nature, being born weak and very temptable, prone to evil and so falling an easy victim to the blandishments and sophistries of the Evil One Having once fallen he neglects his duties, ceases to fear God, and becomes capricious, covetous, proud and generally sinful and impious In consequence, he is temporarily estranged from God The sinner being thus only temporarily and not permanently estranged from God, there is a chance of his becoming reconciled again with his Creator. And the chance lies along the way of *Najāt* or

[1] Sura viii 30 [2] Sura lxxvi 29–30

salvation, and the way itself lies through the three-fold path of Sincere Repentance, Implicit Faith and Good Works Saith the Prophet "Save those who Repent, Believe and Act Aright, none shall enter Paradise " [1]

In the Koran repentance primarily signifies a free and full confession of the offence and then a definite turning away from it to turn to Allah, with a view to secure His pardon and help in the future amendment of life The Islamic theory of Repentance, consequently, is not materially different from the Christian In fact, the whole Islamic conception of Salvation, through repentance, faith and good works, bears a strong general resemblance to the Christian There is yet an important basic difference The Christian conception is based more or less on the doctrine of Original Sin and the depravity of unregenerate human nature, while the Islamic does not admit of any original depravity in man, since the idea of sin in the Koran does not imply any original taint of nature but only a proneness to wrong-doing due to the innate weakness of man Consequently, the Islamic conception of Salvation does not include the element of Regeneration in the sense in which the Christian conception does, and so in effect the *Najāt* or Salvation of Mohammed consists in the deliverance of the faithful from the wages of sin by unquestioning submission to Allah and His wishes as declared in His Revelation

[1] Sura xix 61

THE IMÂN OF MOHAMMED

"If the Imān of Mohammed, which has fixed certain matters of life once for all, was delivered to the people by the right type of preachers, it would vivify the body, purify the thought, fortify the faith, and raise the *morale* of the mass of the Faithful."

Mustapha Kemal Pasha

CHAPTER V

THE IMĀN OF MOHAMMED

To secure salvation, as explained in the foregoing chapter, the sinner, according to the teachings of the Prophet, needed—besides sincere and spontaneous Repentance—implicit Faith (*Imān*) and Good Works (*Din*) The word *Imān*, or faith, in the Islamic scriptures has a wide connotation, and includes not only what we ordinarily mean by it but the whole creed of Islam on its speculative side as opposed to its practical embodied in *Din* and *Shariat* As such it is composed of six articles of Faith which may briefly be summarised under the following six heads·

1 God
2 Angels
3 Scriptures
4 Prophets
5 Judgment
6 Decrees

1 God

As we saw in Chapter II, the principal teaching of Mohammed and the great doctrine of the Koran was the perfect unity and absolute

indivisibility of the Deity It was, he said, the one fundamental truth at the base of every true religion For, though other tenets of faith and rules of practice may vary according to the needs of time and circumstance, this fact of the unity and indivisibility of the Deity being an eternal verity is not subject to change but must continue so immutably to the end of time However, this immutable article of faith followed the ways of all things earthly, and so in the case of every previous religion had been either neglected or corrupted Consequently, in each case God had sent down a prophet to warn mankind, wean them from their erring ways and rehabilitate them once again in that ancient belief which was the one and only true conception of Himself Mohammed was the last of this race of prophets and was, as he himself proclaimed it, "the sign and seal of them all" The Koran most emphatically and insistently calls all the Faithful to hearken unto this last of the apostles of Allah, and narrates what dreadful punishments in ancient days followed those who either rejected or abused His former messengers

> "Praise ye, therefore, the name of thy Lord,
> The Most High!
> Say He is God, one and alone
> God the Eternal
> He begetteth not, and He is not begotten,
> And there is none like unto Him!"

2 ANGELS

The belief in the existence and ministry of

Angels and the tradition which places the doctrine concerning them immediately after that of God are quite in keeping with the Koranic teaching The whole doctrine of the Angels Mohammed derived directly from the Jews, as their names and offices make it only too evident The Jews were similarly indebted to the Persians; consequently, the Islamic angels are the lineal descendants of the Persian

The ancient Persians believed in the ministry of angels and their superintendence over the affairs of mankind, therefore, they assigned them distinct charges and provinces, even going to the length of calling the months and the days of the months after their names—a practice which the Parsis have kept up to this day Likewise, the angels in Islam are the intermediaries of Allah for guarding and helping the true Believers, especially when they are summoned to fight in defence of their faith The angels, being also the recorders of the deeds of men, receive their souls on the other side of the grave, and on the Day of Judgment intercede on behalf of the true believers before the throne of the Highest It is they who support the throne of Allah night and day, and worship Him unceasingly, and at His command prostrate themselves before Adam. One of them, Iblis, refused to obey this command of God, for which act of disobedience he was cast down from Paradise.[1] Iblis, as we saw, is the Evil Spirit of the Koran He is also mentioned

[1] Sura ii 32

in the Koran under the Hebrew derivative —Shaitan The epithet *rajim*, or accursed, is then generally used with the name Shaitan, and at times the other epithet *marid*, or rebellious, is also employed He is often spoken of as the leader of the host of devils, who are not easily distinguishable from the host of jinns or demons [1] The Jinns or genii are created of subtle fire and, generally speaking, come midway between men and angels There are both good and evil Jinns The latter are the spirits that lead men away from the path of duty towards God In fact, the gods which the infidels worship and strive all their lives to keep in countenance and good humour are these evil Jinns Saith the Prophet

> "We will appoint *satans* as their boon companions, for it was they who made their present and future state seem fair and right to them, and the sentence passed on the peoples of Djinn and men who flourished before them hath become their due, and they shall perish " [2]

3 SCRIPTURES

As in the several Scriptures mentioned in the Koran lies the core of Islamic conception of Revelation, it is necessary in the first place to consider what the word "scripture" means in the Koran As is well known, the leading word for scripture is *kitab*, which means literally "what is written" That is the word used for all Scriptures in general, but most frequently it is applied to the Koran itself However, the distinguishing

[1] Sura xviii 48 [2] Sura xli 24

doctrine of Mohammed in this matter is that Allah has in His possession a unique book called *Ummu'l Kitab*, which means Mother of the Book Each successive revelation which the world has received was taken from this archetypal book and sent down to mankind in charge of a special envoy of God. Every preceding Scripture is, therefore, a partial revelation or unveiling of the divine mysteries of heaven and earth It is literally *Kalamu'illâh*, or the Word of God Though the Koran itself being the confirmation and safeguard of the previous Scriptures is in a special sense "the Word of God," yet all the Scriptures mentioned in the Koran can likewise lay claim to that high origin However, by the revealed Scriptures spoken of in the Koran, it is the Old and New Testaments that are most frequently meant In this connection one of the standing accusations which the critics advance against the Prophet is that he quoted Scriptures without taking care to verify his quotations "It remains one of the outstanding anomalies of history," remarks Stanton, "that the religious genius of Arabia, who staked the truth of his message on the witness of previous Scriptures, should have utterly neglected to verify their contents and should have successfully inspired his followers through the ages to a like neglect "[1] Though this is a fact and a very regrettable fact, yet in the circumstances in which the Prophet was placed it could not have

[1] *The Teaching of the Qur'an*, p 42

been otherwise Being "unlettered" himself, he had of necessity to depend on what he received by word of mouth, and whenever an occasion arose for its use he had only his memory to fall back upon So we know to what the scriptural misquotations in the Koran owed their origin and how inevitable they were It is true that their inclusion in the text of the Koran seriously prejudices its claim to being "absolutely free from error," still there is no reason whatever to assume that the Prophet deliberately garbled texts to meet his ends

According to Moslem tradition, in a class by itself, above all the other Revealed Scriptures of the world, stands—as the flower and crown of them all—the Koran On no other point do the detractors and upholders of Islam differ so radically as on the question of the merits and demerits of that "book eternal" The Koran, in fact, is a puzzle book From one point of view it is a book of rare beauties crammed with noble preachings addressed to all mankind, at once evoking its better mind and confirming its strivings and yearnings for the true, the good, and the pure Ever and anon in that book of books occur passages of burning eloquence, perfervid with religious zeal, describing the wonderful Mercy, Power and Unity of Allah And yet, alas, it must be admitted that it is also a book which at time launches out into open contradictions and slithers into inexcusable incoherences, often ending in mere repetitions and rhapsodical

redundancies. The truth of the matter is that the Koran as we now possess it is not, nor could it have been, a perfectly accurate and unimpeachable record of the revelations as the Prophet actually delivered them to his disciples by word of mouth The revelations contained in it were given, as the Moslem chroniclers themselves admit, at various times, in various places, and before various persons At times they were taken down by his secretaries or disciples on parchment, on palm-leaves, or on the shoulder-blades of sheep, and thrown together in a chest, of which one of the Prophet's wives had charge, but most frequently they were merely treasured up in the memories of those who heard them No care appears to have been taken to systematise and arrange this heterogeneous material during the Prophet's life-time, and at his death they remained in scattered fragments, many of them at the mercy of fallacious memories, until Abû Bakr undertook to have them gathered together and methodically transcribed It is, therefore, only natural to suppose that "the Kitab Incomparable" must necessarily have been subjected to unavoidable corruptions and interested interpolations

With all its limitations, the Koran is held in the greatest possible veneration by the Moslems all over the world The simple grandeur of its diction and the chaste elegance of its style are to them proofs positive of the fact that it is a Revelation, pure and unadulterated, derived straight from the great Fountain-Head of all

Revelations[1] Its meaning may be variously interpreted, but its authority is unquestioned in all matters secular or spiritual, and its judgment final whether in Church or State Consequently, in spite of all its incoherences and contradictions, if we consider the Koran as the work of one man, and that an unlettered man, it remains, as Washington Irving rightly puts it, "a stupendous monument of solitary legislation "[2]

4 PROPHETS

As we saw before, each divine revelation vouchsafed to man since Adam, was according to Mohammed sent down in charge of a special envoy of God called *Rasūl* or *Nabī* Both these terms are indifferently applied in the Koran, except that in *sura* xlviii, 29, which is embodied in the great *Kalimet*, the term *Rasūl* is used The first of these rasuls was Adam, as Mohammed was the last and "the Seal of the Prophets" In all twenty-seven prophets are mentioned in the

[1] "The Koran is unique in literature, the most original book in the world Nor can we, as Muslims, for a moment accept the man Muhammad as its author in the ordinary sense Even when I try to view it from the critic's standpoint, it seems to me as if some Power outside Muhammad had taken the Prophet's life and mission, his surroundings and the learning of the time to give an earthly form and colour to a message in itself unearthly, and make it understood by mortal men"—MARMADUKE PICKTHALL

[2] *Life of Mahomet*, Appendix

Koran, of these twenty-two belong to the Old[1] and three to the New Testament,[2] and two others[3] to no scripture whatever It was during the critical period of Mohammed's struggle against the powerful idolaters of Mecca that the life-stories of these prophets were said to have been narrated to him "to confirm his heart thereby."[4] Isolated and oppressed as he was at the time by the powerful hostile interests around him, he was hardly in a position to examine or verify these life-stories before accepting them finally The result was that a medley of Arabian folk-lore, Talmudic legends, and apocryphal gospel was presented by him as revealed truth to his followers, whose faulty memories and interested zeal helped to mutilate the facts still further and to such an extent at times as to call forth and in a sense justify the strictures of later critics.

In the long list of prophets the Koran gives, the name of Hagar, strangely enough, is not even once mentioned However, the prophet whom Mohammed regarded as his chief pattern and exemplar was Abraham He was the true friend of Allah and, being well-grounded in faith, his religion was to be followed by the Faithful. Of Moses Mohammed made less than of Abraham,

[1] Adam, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Eber, Abraham, Lot, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Jethro, Job, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Obadiah(?), Jonah, and Ezra

[2] Zachariah, John the Baptist, and Jesus

[3] Æsop (possibly Balaam), and Alexander

[4] Sura xi 121

though the Koran, in connection with Pharaoh, speaks of him in greater detail But the prophet that is brought into greatest prominence in the Koran was Jesus He is called both by his personal name and by his title of office, and at times designated as the servant of Allah or a spirit from Him, and as the Word of Truth He, however, is not represented as being of divine origin On the contrary, in the Koran Jesus is made to deny in the most explicit terms that he had bidden his disciples to take him or his mother as directly descended from the Almighty He is not a son of Allah, but a creature of His, the same "as Adam was in His sight" Nevertheless, Jesus being a true successor to the former prophets, he came to put fresh life and spirit into the self-same Religion which mankind had inherited from the time of Adam and Abraham It is, moreover, admitted that in his earthly mission Jesus was raised to the loftiest height of knowledge and inspiration by the Holy Spirit of Allah

Finally comes Mohammed as the pinnacle and perfection of the prophetic office Notwithstanding his right to supreme prophetic and apostolic function, incomparable to anything that has gone before, he never once laid claim to be anything more than a mere mortal, subject to all the ills of life and freaks of fortune like any one of his fellow-creatures all over the world. He was a man essentially of the people (*ummi*) who spoke the common tongue and led a life in

every respect in common with them and was in very truth and reality the "people's prophet," foreshadowed in the earlier scriptures Though Mohammed is the great pattern and sole exemplar to the Moslems in every age and clime, yet in the Koran Mohammed remains to the end a mere man, liable to err and make mistakes like any other human being [1] The conception of him as a man apart and unapproachable, as the great and faultless prototype of humanity, is purely a later invention—the product of an Islamism more prepossessed than prepossessing, enthusiastic without enthusiasm, preaching doctrines and narrating stories unwittingly controverting the true intent and purpose of the Prophet's mission on earth

5 JUDGMENT

"It is appointed unto men once to die and after this (cometh) the Judgment" This text taken from the Hebrews epitomises in a sense the

[1] There is a touching story related of the Prophet when he went out for the last time into the mosque, two days before his death After the usual prayers he, addressing the multitude, said "Moslems, if I have wronged any one of you, here I am to answer for it if I owe aught to anyone, let him proclaim it" Upon hearing this, a voice exclaimed, "Yes, me three dirhems, I gave to a beggar at your request" They were immediately paid back, the Prophet observing, "Better to blush in this world than in the next" Incidents like these reveal the real man, the erring, forgetful brother of us all—the veritable Son of our common Mother!

teaching of the Koran on the subject of "death and after" As in the religions preceding it, the leading idea of Islam respecting the state of existence of the disembodied soul in the world everlasting is founded on a belief in the Last Judgment It proclaims that in the great Hereafter every human being will have to render an account of all his or her doings on earth before the Judgment-Seat of Allah, the most just of judges, more, that the happiness or otherwise of each individual soul will primarily depend on the record presented and the manner in which it has striven to carry out the duties laid on it by its Creator However, Allah being the most merciful of judges, besides being the most just, His Mercy and Grace are within the reach of all His creatures, whether of mean capacity or enlarged, and would be bestowed on all alike, whether they were or were not active and zealous in His service

The above is the pivot round which the whole Islamic doctrine of Future Life turns and it is, broadly speaking, the only point in that doctrine the follower of the Prophet is required to believe and accept wholly and unquestioningly The other elements of the Islamic eschatology were all more or less caught up from the floating traditions as they prevailed among races and peoples contemporary with the Prophet and then syncretised, and so are, in fact, more illustrative and expositive of the fundamental doctrine than forming part of it Take, for examples, the beliefs

in the Resurrection of the Dead and in Heaven and Hell Of the two latter places extremely vivid accounts are given in the Koran In fact, *Jannat* and *Jahannam* are the *bêtes noires* of certain critics who never feel happy till they have got hold of the Prophet's *houris* of heaven to prove that the Islamic cast of mind was primarily mundane and essentially sensual. It cannot be denied that the earlier *suras* contain descriptions of Heaven and Hell which are truly deplorable and at times revolting But for that reason to say that the Prophet and his immediate disciples were sensually inclined or that they captured their simple-minded proselytes by post-mortem promises of harems of houris and beds of musk and saffron, and such other "things as eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, nor had it entered into the heart of man to conceive," is a gross perversion of facts The facts, however, are that in those *suras* the Prophet was addressing himself *not* to minds advanced enough to understand and take up the Quest of God and Truth for the pure love of them, or the Pursuit of Right and Virtue for their own sake, but to the wild desert soul of the Arab, steeped in ignorance and materialism of the worst type, to whom only the ideas of future rewards and punishments could act as incentives to the right ordering of life and conduct It was, therefore, necessary that the Prophet's creed of a Future Life should be formulated on such lines and in such language as would be intelligible to the coarse, common

folk of the desert To the wild, famished heart of the Arab used to the great grim expanses of the burning deserts, what visions of Paradise could be more acceptable than those of rivers of wine and gardens of fruits and flowers? Or what forecastings of the Infernal Regions could be more immediately repellent or effectively deterrent than those of the torments of heated irons and of insatiable thirst and hunger? The simple, open-hearted Arab could conceive of no reward or punishment shorn of these sensuous pleasures or pains This is, at all events, the contention of that portion of the Moslem world which, like Sanâi and Ghazzâli, holds that these extremely vivid descriptions of Heaven and Hell are to be taken, not literally but metaphorically, and that the whole teaching of the Prophet on the subject is capable of bearing a purely allegorical and spiritual meaning On the other hand, it must be confessed that the general and orthodox doctrine is that the whole teaching must be accepted and strictly believed in in the obvious and literal significance of the terms It is, however, admitted on all hands that behind those vivid descriptions of the celestial and nether regions there assuredly lies a deeper meaning, and that the joy of joys, as the torment of torments, consists in the veil, which hides the Creator from mortal vision, being torn or left untorn, and in heavenly glory in all its unspeakable splendour being or not being revealed to the soul of the person who has passed beyond the bounds of

earthly existence. "The most favoured of men," said the Prophet, "will be he who shall see his Lord's face and glory night and day, a felicity which will surpass all the pleasures of the body as the ocean surpasses a drop of perspiration"

Likewise the other great doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead is borrowed from the earlier Scriptures "There can be no doubt," says Martin Haug, "that this important doctrine of the Resurrection of the dead is genuine Zoroastrian dogma, which developed itself naturally from Spitama Zarathushtra's sayings There is not the slightest trace of its being borrowed from a foreign source"[1] The Jews and the Christians also believed in a bodily resurrection, and their more definite ideas of it, as those of Mohammed himself, were all derived from the original Zoroastrian doctrine

6 DECREES

The sixth and the last article in the *Imān* of Mohammed, and the one that has in a way proved the most contentious and factious of all, is the Doctrine of Decrees Various Islamic sects and schools of thought which in a large measure owe their origin to this doctrine, put various and contradictory interpretations on it. Simply stated, the doctrine proclaims that whatever has happened in the world or shall take place in the future, whether it be good or bad,

[1] *Essays on the Religion of the Parsis*, p 220.

proceeds primarily from the Divine Will and is irrevocably fixed and recorded from all eternity on the "Preserved Tablet" Saith the Prophet

> "Say, verily, the matter belongeth wholly unto God· for Allah knoweth the innermost parts of the breast of men no soul can die (or do anything) unless by the permission of Allah, according to what is written in the book containing the pre-ordination of things "[1]

From the above and various other sayings of the Prophet it is evident that he firmly believed in and consistently preached the doctrine of Pre-ordination of Things There have been in the main two great objections levelled against this doctrine—namely, that, speaking logically it makes God the author of Evil and that it inevitably leads men into indolent acceptance of events as they happen, and saps their sense of moral responsibility for their acts and motives

As to the first charge, we saw in Chapter IV that Evil in the Islamic theory of Creation is merely a tool in the hands of the Highest performing its appointed task in the ultimate furtherance of the inscrutable Divine will and purpose Such being the Moslem conception of Evil—as a great reality playing its vital and indispensable part in the grand drama of evolving humanity—there could be no *intelligent* objection, though I admit there has been and ever will be a *sentimental* one, in making God the one, all-

[1] Sura iii 139, 148

dominant creator of all things whatsoever in heaven or on earth, as in fact it has been done in the Koran itself

"Say, whatsoever is in the Heavens and the Earth is Allah's[1] All measures of good and evil are from Allah Say, Allah is the creator of all things, He is the One, the All-dominant![2] Praise ye, therefore, the name of thy Lord the Most High, who hath created and balanced all things, who hath fixed their measures and guideth them "[3]

As to the second charge, we have already seen in Chapter III that it is possible for one to believe whole-heartedly in the doctrine of Decrees and yet lead a life of activity and usefulness in vigorous pursuit of one's ideals and ambitions, as is so amply proved by the strenuous life which the great propounder and promoter of the doctrine himself led Again, on the problem of man's moral responsibility for his acts and motives the Moslem opinion is sharply divided The Shiahs on the whole affirm man's responsibility, while Sunnites as a class deny it We do not wonder that there should be a division of opinion in this complicated matter of human responsibility, seeing that the Prophet himself was never at any time so wholly explicit, nor logical, nor even consistent on this point as he was on other points of his teaching For instance, in *sura* iv. 81, it is clearly said "Whatever good betideth thee is from God, and whatever betideth thee of evil is

[1] Sura iii 124 [2] Sura xiii 17
[3] Sura lxxxvii 1, 2 3

from thyself" And yet in the text immediately preceding the last it is said with equal explicitness "If good fortune betide them, they say, 'This is from Allah', and if evil betide them, they say, 'This is from thee.' Say, All is from Allah But what hath come to these people that they are not near to understanding what is told them?"[1] So repeatedly and in such varied forms is the latter view—namely, "*All is from Allah*" —upheld that we should be quite justified in maintaining that the source and inspirer of all human actions and motives was the Creator Himself He it is who "misleadeth whom He will and whom He will He guideth" He again it is "who forgiveth whom He will, and whom He will chastiseth"[2] Wholly arbitrary as His Judgment may appear and cruelly inexorable as His Will may seem to limited human vision, yet all the glory and grandeur of human life consists in developing, in direct contradiction of that limited vision, a living Faith in the supreme Wisdom and perfect Justice of God's will and purpose and at the same time finding a working creed in the famous exhortation

> "What shapest thou here at the world? 'Tis shapen long ago
> The Maker shaped it, He thought it best even so
> Thy lot is appointed—Go follow its hest,
> Thy journey's begun—Thou must move and not rest,
> For sorrow and care cannot alter thy case,
> And running, not raging, will win thee the race"

[1] Sura iv 80
[2] Sura iii 124

THE DIN OF MOHAMMED

"The Din of Mohammed with its stern discipline and its severe morality, has proved itself the only practical religion for natures which are prone to drift into a lawless materialism "

Syed Ameer Ali

CHAPTER VI

THE DIN OF MOHAMMED

GENERALLY speaking, there are two sides to a religion—the Speculative and the Practical; and the more vital the religion is, the more evenly are the two sides adjusted. Should, however, the Speculative side predominate, the religion gets unbalanced, gradually loses its hold on the masses and becomes a mere barren metaphysical system, like the later Brahmanism, more suited for whiling away the leisure of a philosophic mind than for guiding the erring, struggling, aspiring human soul in its uncertain journey here towards its distant goal beyond. If, on the other hand, the Practical preponderates, the religion stands in danger of being crushed by the sheer weight of its own dead mass of rules and rites which, degenerating sooner or later into mere routine and superstition, eventually ends, like the Pharisaical Judaism of the time of Christ, in a gilded, soulless anachronism. The Religion of Mohammed, much as it may fall short of the claim to being reckoned as the highest religion of mankind, can with justice be described as being the most vital of all the living religions of the world, not excluding even Christianity. Consequently, we ought to expect an attempt made

therein to preserve the necessary balance between the two sides And we are not disappointed in our expectations, for counterbalancing the six fundamental articles of Faith are the five basic duties or rules of religious practice with the sixth and completing great Law of Life, unfolded under the familiar and comprehensive term *Sharī'ah*

The above five duties or rules of religious practice to all intents and purposes compose the *Din* of Mohammed which may be considered under the following five heads

1 The Confession of Faith
2 Prayers
3 Almsgiving
4 Fasting
5 Pilgrimage

1 THE CONFESSION OF FAITH

As this duty is not primarily mentioned or specifically enjoined in the Koran, some expounders of Islam consider that it is not included in the *Din* of Mohammed But the Prophet being himself commanded to preach and magnify the name of Allah, and as he stands for all time as the great pattern and exemplar to all Believers, we should be justified in considering the Confession of Faith both as a religious practice of primary importance to all Believers alike and as a matter of solemn obligation to those of them who are actively employed in the preaching and propagation of the name of Allah In its narrower

sense the Confession consists in the practice of the recital of the sacred *Kalimet* at proper times and with due reverence. In its more comprehensive aspect it resolves itself into a duty which is to be carried out with equal care and devotion in two directions (*a*) subjectively, as affecting the personal attitude of the Believer, by the practice of *taqwā* or piety; (*b*) objectively, by regulating his whole life on the fundamental conception of Islam—namely, of the complete and whole-hearted submission of one's self and one's possessions to the supreme will and purpose of the Deity

(*a*) *Taqwā* literally means fear or abstinence. In its expanded form it means the fear of Allah which keeps one away from idolatry and other evils of a like nature Essentially, however, *taqwā* or piety consists in wholly believing in the truth, in being absolutely sincere in worship and in carefully and continuously preparing one's soul for the life to come Not the flesh of sacrifice nor the blood of martyrdom but the piety of the Faithful reaches Allah Like Jesus, Mohammed taught that the pious are meek and lowly of heart, patient and forbearing, ever conscious and penitent of their own failings and weaknesses and unswervingly just and scrupulously fair in all their dealings with their fellow-men The creed of their life is devotion, their maxim, moderation; their ideal, purity These they practise not out of any superstitious fear or dread of Allah but from pure, heartfelt love and reverence of Him,

(*b*) Islam, as we have already seen, sums up in one word the whole gospel of Mohammed, and means primarily the glad submission of Man's to God's will, or rather the merging of the short-sighted, self-centred will of Man into the all-embracing, all-subtilising will of God Islam is, as in fact it is said in *sura* ii 32, "the baptism (*sibghah*) of Allah" It is at once His primary rule and a high road to Him, and is only acceptable to Him if professed in its entirety and lived up to whole-heartedly, and when a continuous and strenuous spiritual fight is put up with oneself and with others in its defence and for its propagation

2 PRAYERS

One of the most important institutions of Mohammed is Prayer So important, indeed, did the Prophet think prayer to be, that he used to call it "the pillar of religion" and "the key of Paradise", and when the Thakifites came on a mission to him and begged of him to exempt them from his ordinance of daily prayers, the Prophet returned the celebrated answer

"There could be no good in that religion wherein no prayer was enjoined"

That so important a religious practice might not be neglected by his followers, Mohammed enjoined that they should pray five times a day at certain stated intervals, and instituted the office of *muezzin* to call the Faithful to prayer

at those fixed hours. The Believers, while saying their prayers, are required to turn their faces towards that home and hearth of Moslem religious fervour and aspirations, the holy city of Mecca, to chaunt them in a well-modulated voice, and to adopt certain postures and prostrate themselves after a set fashion A stranger watching the Faithful at prayer and noticing these manifold prostrations and strange genuflexions, and not realising the inward value and immediate utility of these set prayers and postures, is apt to speak of them lightly, if not slightingly. "According to the Moslem theory," says a Christian critic, "prayer is reduced to a gymnastic exercise and a mechanical act" No wonder that the average, matter-of-fact Christian, habituated to the hebdomadal flocking into churches and chapels, and the otiose worship of droning prelates and chaunting monks, should look on the prostrating Faithfuls at their daily prayers with amused indifference and superior levity! But one has to realise the intensity of the devotional spirit embalmed in the creed of Mohammed to understand the part played by Prayer in it. In the first place, it must be remembered that the Islam of Mohammed recognises no caste or order of priesthood, allows no monopoly of spiritual knowledge and admits no claims of special holiness to intervene between Man and his Creator In Islam, consequently, no ministration of a priest or intermediation of a hierophant save that of prayers is needed to bring the

individual soul into communion with the All-Soul Nor need the anxious heart resort to any sacrifice or call to its aid any ceremonial except prayers in seeking the comfort and solace of the Great Comforter

Islamic prayers are of two kinds *salāt* or set prayers, and *du'ā* or spontaneous prayers The former are obligatory on all the Believers, the latter are mostly a matter of one's own option and of special occasion But in either form the value of Prayer as a means of moral elevation and the purification of the heart is, according to the Prophet's teaching, unquestionable It is true that it was the practice of the Prophet to associate certain simple rites and rules of practical hygiene with his saying of prayers, and such rules and rites are also enjoined on his disciples, but he was careful to explain that the most punctilious observance of the external rites and ceremonies was of little or no avail if the inward disposition of the heart, which is the life and spirit of prayer, was lacking in grace and fellow-feeling, "in purity and humility of spirit" [1] The Prophet proclaimed

"There is no piety in turning your faces towards the east or towards the west, but he is pious who believeth in Allah, and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Scriptures, and the Prophets, who for the love of Allah disburseth his wealth to the kindred, and to the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and those who ask, and for ransoming, who observeth Prayer, and payeth the legal alms, and who is of those who are faithful

[1] Sura vii 204

to their engagements when they have engaged in them, and patient under ills and hardships, and in time of trouble these are they who are just, and these are they who fear the Lord "[1]

In the present state of our highly-organised and widely-ramified civilisation this simple rule of religious practice which Mohammed enjoined on all his followers—namely, of saying set prayers five times a day at stated intervals, is of the most immediate and vital use to us all, even to those who are outside the Islamic fold In the incessant clamour and rush of modern life our eyes and ears, our brains and nerves so suffer from over-stimulation that they get exhausted and show all the signs of age and decay long before their time People in the great cities of the West tread a vicious circle in haste and without rest such a mode of existence must sooner or later tell on their health and strength and eventually end in their partial, if not complete breakdown "Americans are rushing madly to the grave," says Dr Eugene Fisk, the President of the Life Extension Institute of New York, "lashing themselves into fictitious activity with stimulants of health-wrecking devices and discoveries as they gallop through life Americans do not overwork, do too little thinking, but do everything hurriedly and heedlessly If they do not want to head straight into a national future of insanity, suicide, and drug-taking, they have simply got to call a halt!" Consequently, in the modern world of

[1] Sura ii 172

hurry and hustle the Prophet's ordinance of Prayer is of special and immediate use to us all, inasmuch as it would, if adopted, compulsorily "call a halt" at fixed intervals each day in the life of each one of us, which besides refreshing our spirit, would give a chance to our fatigued brains and nerves to recreate themselves for the time being

3 ALMSGIVING

All religions, especially those of Jesus and Zoroaster, speak of Charity in high terms and inculcate its practice in the form of almsgiving as a thing of special merit and pleasing to God But, with the exception of Zoroastrianism, no religion of the world prior to Islam had consecrated Almsgiving as a great principle of life, nor had any of the Prophets laid it down as one of the fundamental tenets of his creed as the Prophet of Islam did With them it was a pious exhortation, a virtue worthy of being cultivated, but not a solemn obligation nor a fixed rule demanding that instant obedience and life-long practice from their disciples which Mohammed most emphatically demanded from his Almsgiving in his system was, in fact, systematically coupled with Prayer as a mark of the true Believer Like Prayer, again, it is of two kinds *Zakāt*, signifying obligatory alms, and *Sadaqah*, voluntary offerings The former is essential to religion and signifies a kind of tax levied on various kinds of property and income at a fixed rate

This compulsory tax was to be exacted not only from the Believers, but also from defeated foes who accepted Islam and thus became brothers in the faith The second kind of almsgiving, though largely a matter of choice and convenience, is none the less a proof of the Believer's sincerity in the worship of God and of his goodwill towards his fellow-kind Both are to be given from what one can spare after providing one's self and family with the indispensable necessities of life and yet in the Koran it is said, "Ye cannot attain to true piety until ye expend in alms of what ye love and cherish "[1]

4 FASTING

The practice of Fasting, like that of charity, has prevailed among all peoples and has been enjoined in one form or another by all religions with perhaps the solitary exception of Zoroastrianism But speaking generally the idea with which it was preached and practised in the pre-Islamic period was that of penitence rather than that of abstinence Both in Judaism and Christianity Fasting was primarily a mode of expiation to which the penitent heart resorted as an assured way of making amends for its delinquencies Its practice as an exercise of self-abnegation was of subsequent growth In Islam, on the contrary, Fasting was from the very beginning instituted as a means of acquiring greater control over one's self by keeping in check for stated periods its

[1] Sura iii 86

natural desires and inclinations In other words, it is a means of chastening the spirit by a diurnal abstinence for a fixed and limited period from all gratification of the senses It was during the sacred month of Ramazān that this practice of self-abnegation was enjoined on all Believers But with that eye for the practical, which is such a distinguishing feature of the religious code of Mohammed, he exempted the traveller, the soldier, the student and those who were weak and ailing from observing the fast during the month of Ramazān, provided they fasted later on when able

5 PILGRIMAGE

Mohammed with the true instinct of a prophet and the unerring insight of a born psychologist perceived that the vagrant ideas and fleeting emotions of his careless, shiftless followers were likely to be dissipated unless conserved by bringing them to a focus on some central object of immediate and absorbing interest to them Consequently, to fix these fleeting fancies and to create a kind of spiritual bond among the widely-scattered believers in the new faith, he enjoined that everywhere throughout the world the Moslem should pray turning his face towards the *Kaabh* in Mecca Likewise, to forge out of that purely spiritual bond of prayer a visible solidarity of thought and feeling and a real brotherhood of faith, he instituted the custom of annual Pilgrimage to Mecca and the shrine of

the *Kaabh*. Here in the appointed month, when the Moslems from all over the world foregather and tread the soil hallowed by the feet of their Prophet and consecrated by the blood of their martyrs, they feel drawn to their faith and their fellow-believers in a manner which none outside their fold can even faintly realise The Holy City with its sacred relics and desert surroundings carries the Moslem back to the early struggles and later achievements of his Prophet and Saviour. It vividly portrays to his mind's eye the death-grip of the old, effete faith on the bounding impulse of the new, the long-drawn struggle and the eventful destruction of the crumbling idols and the re-establishment of the ancient worship of the One and Only God Most of all it bids him remember that all that are gathered on that sacred spot are his brother-Moslems, united to him by the same great faith, actuated by the same great ideals, worshipping the same great God and yielding obedience to the same great Prophet Here again the practical wisdom and accommodative spirit of this great Lawgiver of Islam shines forth in two directions in laying down certain conditions which the pilgrim had to fulfil before starting on his intended journey, and in prescribing the ceremonies which were to be performed once he had entered the Holy City. As to the former, five conditions were laid down namely, the pilgrim should (1) have attained the age of discretion, (2) have means sufficient to maintain those dependent on him during

his absence, (3) be himself in possession of the means of transport and subsistence during the entire journey, (4) be in a position to leave his work without causing any dislocation or inconvenience to anyone, (5) assure himself before starting of the possibility and practicability of the voyage As to the ceremonies prescribed, they were mostly those observed by the Pagan Arabs centuries before the Prophet's appearance: consequently, the critics of Islam characterise them "not only as silly and ridiculous in themselves, but as relics of idolatrous superstition "[1] It must at once be admitted that the greater part of these prescribed rites are of no intrinsic worth, as they are neither conducive to the spiritual elevation of the Pilgrim nor capable of undergoing any rational tests, but are altogether arbitrary and enjoined apparently with a view to conciliate the known bigotry and conservatism of the Arab mind We all know how with certain types of men the most trivial and insignificant things of life are the objects of greatest veneration and superstition Mohammed found such to be the case with the type of men he had to deal with He found it much easier to abolish idolatry itself than to eradicate the ingrained superstitious awe and bigotry of the Arabs for their age-worn temple and the ancient ceremonials attached to it While the Prophet remained adamant and uncompromising on the fundamental articles of his faith, he was par-

[1] Sale's *Koran*, sect v

ticularly accommodative and conciliatory in the non-essential points of his creed. Consequently, rather than frustrate his main design of Pilgrimage, he not only allowed them their ancient rites and ceremonial processions, but with due reverence took part in them himself However, before joining in those rites and processions he took care to make certain changes in their mode of performance so as to lead the surging torrents of reverential feelings evoked away from the sacred things themselves to the great Source of all things whatever, thus following the example of the great legislators of old—who instituted *not* such laws as were absolutely the best in themselves, but the best their people were capable of receiving and what the nature of circumstances would permit of adopting in an era of transition

THE SHARIĀT OF MOHAMMED

"The sacred institutions of the Prophet are the most sublime and the most beneficent sources for the spiritual evolution and moral regeneration of the people of all Islamic lands."

Mustapha Kemal Pasha

CHAPTER VII

THE SHARIĀI OF MOHAMMED

IN the first three chapters we dealt with ideas that lay at the foundations of Islam, while in the last three chapters we surveyed the superstructure of Salvation, Faith and Duties, which the Prophet raised on them The great architect of Islam was, however, not content with merely laying down the foundations and raising the superstructure of a purely religious institution, but aspired to the erection of a mighty edifice of general rules and regulations, covering the entire stretch of Life itself Consequently, the authority of the Prophet as the revealer of the will and purpose of Allah extended not only to matters strictly religious, but to all the varied affairs and pursuits of Life—political and military, civil and criminal, social and domestic In other words, the Prophet's revelations in the Koran embody and unfold the whole Law of Life

Of law as such there is little mention The familiar term *sharī'ah* occurs but once [1] in the Koran, and the cognate word *shir'ah* is likewise mentioned once only [2] There is nothing like the Decalogue of Moses in the Koran, though there

[1] Sura xlv 17 [2] Sura v 52

are several sets of commands and exhortations, precepts and prohibitions which go to indicate that Mohammed had the Jewish, Christian and other religious systems in mind when he gave out his own code of commands and prohibitions The code, however, has to be gathered out of scattered passages in various *suras*, such as vi 152–165, xvi 92–128, xvii 23–40, xxv 64–76, and xxxi 12–18 Neither in the above *suras* nor in any other shorter summaries can we detect any distinct principle or even a definite mode of arrangement However, the most systematic of these summaries is that contained in *sura* xvii The commands contained therein may be briefly given under the following twelve heads

1 Set not up other gods with Allah

2 Be kind and respectful to parents and defer out of tenderness to their wishes

3 Give what is due to kinsmen, to the poor and to the wayfarer

4 Be not wasteful nor be ungrateful, for Satan was ungrateful to his Lord

5 Do not be sparing nor yet be lavish, lest thou sit thee down in rebuke and in beggary.

6 Slay not your children for fear of poverty

7 Draw not near to fornication nor to the wealth of the orphan

8 Slay not anyone except for a just cause

9. Keep your covenants faithfully

10 Give full measure and weigh with just balance.

11. Give no heed to reports of which thou hast no knowledge

12 Walk not proudly on the earth "All of these things are evil and odious unto the Lord."

Of those virtues especially enjoined in the Islamic system, the ruling one was that which has consistently been advanced in the earlier Mazdayasnian creed—namely, Temperance or avoidance of excess In other words, the Islamic system inculcates liberality without extravagance; kindness to all without being actually indulgent; making the best of men and circumstances as one finds them, "returning evil by that which is better", fairness in dealings, truthfulness in giving evidence, faithfulness to engagements, obedience to those in authority, patience under ills and hardships of life, and endurance in time of trouble, and to sum up in brief, Constancy and Continence in all acts of life, and unquestioning Obedience to Allah and to His Prophet in all that is right But the epitome of the Prophet's works and teachings, which moves the Moslem most and is not without its immediate appeal to all men alike, is that which Jâfar, son of Abû Tâlib, the brother of Ali, gave in reply to Negus, the Christian king of Abyssinia, to whose court he had fled with the first batch of Moslem refugees. When Negus sent for the refugees and asked them, "What is this religion of yours for which you have abandoned your home, your people and your creed, and adopted a faith that is neither

mine nor of any people I know of?" Jâfar, acting as spokesman for the fugitives, addressed the king thus

"Hear us, O king! We were a horde of idol-worshippers given to blood-feuds and excess of all kinds we ate dead bodies and practised abominable rites, we knew no law but that of the strong, and as we were immersed in the utmost depths of ignorance and superstition, we disregarded every feeling of humanity and our duties to our neighbours and our fellow-beings When we were thus irretrievably lost in the depths of darkness and degradation, Allah, O king, took mercy on us and raised among us a man, of whose birth, purity, truthfulness and integrity all alike bear the highest testimony He it was who taught us the unity of God and besought us not to associate anything with Him He it was who forbade us the worship of idols and enjoined us to speak the truth, to be faithful to our trusts and covenants, to regard the rights of neighbours and to be kind and merciful to all He commanded us not to ill-use our women, not to speak evil of them, nor eat the substance of orphans He further ordered us to offer prayers, to give alms, to observe the fast, to fly vices and abstain from evil of every kind We have believed in him, we have accepted his teachings and his injunction to worship God alone, and not to associate anything with Him This has been our fault, O king, for which our kith and kin have risen against us, called down curses on our heads and so ill-used us in every other way that finding no peace and safety among them, we have, O king, come to your country to seek your protection and crave your mercy!"

The salient features of Islamic ideals and legislation as unfolded in the Koran are very succinctly brought out by the above address of Jâfar, let us now see what the same great book of Islam

has to say about the particular departments of life and society—namely, about Government, Khalifate, Women, Slavery, Laws (civil and criminal), Regulations (social, domestic and ceremonial), and finally about Warfare, Religious Tolerance and Human Brotherhood

GOVERNMENT

As in all things Islamic, the Koran is relied on as the basis of all government in the Moslem states Yet, strangely enough, the great Book of Islamic Revelations lays down no definite system of political institutions, nor does it advance any concrete theory of government beyond outlining the bare form of theocracy The fact, however, was that political power was so wholly centred in the person of the Prophet and his authority was so dominant and unchallenged, that whatever ordinances were needed on particular occasions were immediately promulgated by him in his capacity of *rasūl* or messenger of God, and all that the Faithful had to do was quietly to receive and obey them. The absence of specific direction in the matter of state legislation was a cause of immediate perplexity and bitter strife after the Prophet's demise, and to overcome these difficulties various offices, secular and religious, had to be created

An examination of the political condition and institutes of the Moslems under the immediate successors of the Prophet brings into view a government more or less popular, administered

by an elected head with powers strictly limited. The prerogatives of the head of the state were chiefly confined to executive and administrative functions, such as the regulation of the police, control of the army, transaction of foreign affairs, disbursement of the revenue, and appointments to various offices of state The tribunals were, however, left free to determine their awards and deliver their judgments as would best meet the ends of justice In fact, even in that early age the Law was the same for the poor as for the rich, for the man in power as for the labourer in the field On the whole, Islam gave to the people a code which, however archaic in its principles and structure, was broad-based enough to be capable of unlimited development with the progress of material civilisation At all events, it conferred on the state a flexible constitution based on a just appreciation of human rights and human duties It not only made men equal in the eye of the law, but by defining the source and limiting the amount of taxation it unconsciously introduced one of the first principles of self-government in the conduct of the state It established, besides, a control over the sovereign power by rendering the executive authority subordinate to the law—a law based upon certain religious sanctions and other moral obligations involved in the Koran

As time advanced and the reins of government fell into the hands of usurping tyrants, even then the outward form of a law-abiding executive

head was consistently maintained, though the stringency of the system had much relaxed and practically disappeared. For instance, every Friday, after divine service, the Commander of the Faithful formally announced to the assembly the important nominations and events of the day Technically everyone had the right of attending these general assemblies of the public, and no one was excluded from them And as the prefects in their several provinces strictly followed the example of their head in this respect, no person in the camp or the city was a stranger to public affairs and, consequently, one might be justified in making a general statement that while in Europe and the rest of Asia the people possessed no recognised civil rights or political privileges, and while the peasantry of those countries was labouring under the badge of both prædial servitude and domestic slavery, the Islamic lands enjoyed, though in a rudimentary form, the basic rights and privileges of a real democracy

KHALIFATE

Alas for the greed of earthly power and the anarchic instincts of individuals, the lands of Islam, like the rest, did not escape the curse of religious strife and dynastic wars The Church of Mohammed, like the Church of Christ, has been rent by internal divisions and sacerdotal greed ever since the Prophet's demise On abstract subjects, about which in our finite existence

there could not in the nature of things be any certitude or finality, difference of opinion always will arise and must arise But most of the differences and divisions in the Church of Mohammed owe their origin primarily to political and dynastic quarrels and the strong feeling of jealousy which animated the other Koreishites against the family of the Prophet

It is generally supposed that the Prophet had not expressly designated anyone as his successor in the spiritual and temporal government of Islam This supposition, however, is founded on a mistaken apprehension of facts for there is abundant evidence to prove that, though Mohammed had never expressly stated, he had yet on many occasions unmistakably indicated his son-in-law Ali for the vicegerency Nevertheless, to that supposition, erroneous as it was, might be ultimately traced all the divisions and dissensions that crept into the Islamic fold after the Prophet's passing away

We need not stop here to trace the chequered history of the beliefs prevailing among the several Moslem sects, nor to recount the many names and varied fortunes of their several successive heads Nor do we intend to be drawn here into that age-long controversy, as futile as inconclusive, of "the true Imâmate," for fear of our being lost in "the wand'ring mazes" of Sunnite schoolmen and Shiite casuists Sufficient be it for our present purpose to make a general statement that the Imâm as the spiritual exemplar

and leader of Islam must be a man approximating as closely as possible to the Prophet in character, intellect, and spirituality More, that in his dual capacity of Sultan-Khalifa — as the vicar and lieutenant of the Prophet, and as the temporal head of the state and the commander of the Faithful—he must be in possession of sufficient authority and independence to maintain the dignity and high office of his apostolic succession and keep intact his religio-juridical rights over "the Holy Places of Islam" — namely, over Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, and Kerbalah

Strictly speaking, the Imâmate or the Khalifate should be as indivisible as the Papacy But as three Popes have from time to time laid claim to the triple crown, so have three Khalifs to the supreme rule and headship of the three Islamic portions of the earth Of the three aspirants, the Sultan of Turkey, however, has the best claim to the title and dignity of Khalif Not only has he been the undisputed holder of the insignia of the Khalifate—the banner, the sword and the mantle of the Prophet, but the actual Warden of the Holy Places for the last few centuries He has been, besides, the most powerful of the Moslem rulers, and his suzerainty over Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia and Hedjaz—that is, the whole of the Jazirat-ul-Arab—was never questioned before the War But since the defeat of the Turks in the War and the newly awakened zeal and enthusiasm of Indian Moslems for the reformation and redintegration of their ancient

faith, the problem of the suzerainty of the Jazirat-ul-Arab and the Wardenship of the Holy Places—in fact, the whole question of the Khalifate—has in many ways assumed the importance of a world-problem

Such an importance, indeed, do the upholders of the Khalifate attach to it that they speak of it as if it were the key-stone of the Islamic arch which, if neglected or in any way disturbed, would endanger the whole span of their religion Its detractors, on the other hand, contend that the bare fact that the Prophet did not expressly mention his successor nor leave any unimpeachable ordinance on the subject beyond what might be called recommendatory behests, arguable and inconclusive, proves in itself that he did not consider that the Khalifate was an article of his faith having the same vital and fundamental importance as the other articles about which he had left positive and indisputable commandments Consequently, they consider the question of the Khalifate as being more sentimental than real, and the Shiah Mussulmans of Persia even go so far as to maintain that it is pure blasphemy for a Moslem to apply the name of "Caliph" and the title of *Amir-el-Mu'min* or the Commander of the Faithful to anyone except Caliph Ali ibn Amu-Talib of blessed memory.

Though there is a distinct vein of exaggeration running through the above assertions of the detractors of the Khalifate, no honest or impartial expounder of the faith of Mohammed would care

to dispute that there is a substratum of truth in their argument It may be that the question of the Khalifate, more so the present agitation about it, is more sentimental than real But it is based on a noble sentiment which oftentimes in the spiritual affairs of men counts for more than the mere hard and fast articles of faith. And it is a sentiment which, inspired by the great past of Islam, endeavours to preserve intact and undiminished for the future what is left of its ancient glory and power Nay, more, it aspires to revive the old religious discipline and enthusiasm among its vast and heterogeneous following by breathing fresh life and vigour into the old law and tradition For such an awakening of Islam, however, a nucleus—a rallying-point—is needed to bring together the slowly-disintegrating religious instincts of the Faithful and muster up the scattered spiritual forces of Al Islam Consequently, all who have the good of Islam at heart and wish her well, cannot but hope that the Khalifate would be firmly established before long, and established *not* on the thin fabric of past reputation and dead postulates, but on the solid ground-work of present credit and more living issues more, that the new Khalifa would be given the necessary authority and independence to allow him to recover as much as possible of the lost power and prestige of that old historic institution which is embodied in his person and finds expression in his acts.

WOMEN

In no matter concerning Mohammed's religion have Christian writers shown greater hostility to Islam than in their scathing denunciation of the Islamic institution of plurality of wives, nor on any point of the Prophet's life and character have they been less sparing of their wild vituperation than on that of his several marriages. We can understand and applaud the noble zeal and ardour of those writers for the sacred cause of Monogamy, but we can neither understand nor approve of their hasty and unqualified arraignment of the Prophet and of his characteristic institution

In the first place let us remember that among all ancient nations, Eastern and Western, Polygamy was more or less a recognised institution. Among the ancient Medes, Persians, Assyrians and Babylonions, as among the ancient Greeks, Romans, Germans, and even the primitive Christians, until forbidden by the Laws of Justinian, Polygamy in one form or another consistently and universally prevailed Therefore, the first fact to be borne in mind is that Mohammed was not the first to adopt nor the first to legalise Polygamy, which flourished unchecked all over the then known world On the contrary, the reforms promulgated by the Prophet in this direction not only toned down the worst features of the institution itself, but effected a marked improvement in the status of Women as a class. Another fact to be remembered is that Polygamy

often is purely the outcome of circumstances At certain times and in certain stages of civilisation, its practice is made a matter of sheer necessity for the preservation of the weaker sex from actual starvation and consequent destitution And the condition of Women at the time of the Prophet's appearance among the settled pagan Arabs was such as to make the system of plurality of wives imperatively necessary Witness the horrible custom of the pagan Arabs of burying alive their female infants for fear of the child having eventually to pass her life in unmated indigence or in uncared-for concubinage.

In the social scale of both the Persian and Byzantine empires, the Women occupied a very low place indeed. At a time when the social fabric was crumbling to pieces on all sides and Women were the greatest sufferers in the general disintegration, Mohammed introduced his regulations, which went to give certain status to them, and created thereby a kind of respect for them Before his time a woman in the household of pagan Arabs was a mere chattel, and the widows of the father, apart from the mother, descended to the son like any other portion of his patrimony, which he could dispose of as he felt inclined Mohammed interdicted this horrible custom and secured to the widows rights which they never enjoyed before, and, in fact, in the exercise of all legal powers and functions he placed Women on a footing of perfect equality with men. For instance, Marriage in Islam being a civil act

requiring no priest nor any ceremonial, the rights of a wife as a mother do not depend for their recognition upon the whims of any individual judge, but upon the actual text in the book of Law Her earnings acquired by her own exertions cannot be claimed by her husband, nor can she be ill-treated by him with impunity In all matters pertaining to herself and her own individual property she acts *sui juris* without the intervention of husband or father, nor is she compelled to join anyone, as is the case in English Law, to make valid her claim on her debtors. In other words, the contract of marriage gives the man no power over the woman's person, beyond what the law defines, and none whatever upon her goods and property Consequently, the Woman in Islam, married or single, has practically all the rights which the Law gives to men

It is evident from the above that it is wrong to call down anathemas on the institutions of Mohammed relative to Women and grossly unfair to attribute to him their present backward condition in Islamic lands This latter is due more to want of culture and educational facilities among the community than to any radical defects in the laws themselves However, the case is different when we come to discuss the principle of plurality of wives in Islamic Law and seek justification for the several marriages of the Prophet himself It has been contended by Syed Ameer Ali and other Moslem scholars of advanced views that polygamy is "contrary to

the spirit of Islam," and "is as much opposed to the teachings of Mohammed as it is to the general progress of civilised society and true culture "[1] In support of this contention of theirs they quote the celebrated third verse from the great *sura* on *Women*, which says

> "And if ye are apprehensive that ye shall not deal fairly with orphans, then, of other women who seem good in your eyes, take in marriage two, or three or four, but not more Still if ye fear that ye shall not be able to act equitably towards all of them—then marry one only "

Owing to the great importance of the latter proviso and of the word *adl* (equity) in the Koranic teachings, "the first Mutazalite doctors taught," argues Mr Ameer Ali, "that the developed Koranic laws inculcated monogamy "[2]

While one cannot but applaud the noble intention of the learned Syed to defend his Prophet against a general charge of propounding Polygamy, one fails to appreciate the mode of reasoning by means of which he undertakes that difficult duty. A layman might well be tempted to argue "If, as you say, Polygamy was contrary to the spirit of Islam and really opposed to the teachings of Mohammed, then it logically follows that Mohammed by taking to Polygamy acted against the spirit of his own religion, and by marrying several wives proved false to his own teachings "

From the above, it is evident that the first

[1] *The Spirit of Islam*, p 327 and p 365, note.
Ibid, p 327.

Mutazalite doctors have not advanced the cause of Islam much by attaching great importance to the word *adl* in the famous text and developing therefrom an untenable theory of Koranic laws inculcating monogamy No matter what great importance the doctors, Mutazalite and others, might attach to the word *adl*, it is plain that so long as a Moslem had no fear of dealing "inequitably" by his several wives, he could by the Law of the Prophet contract marriage with two, or three, or four women It was the fear of not being able to deal fairly and equitably by his several wives that kept the Moslem back from Polygamy, and *not* the realisation of the inherent wrong in having marital relations with more than one woman And in this realisation of the inherent wrong in having marital relations with more than one woman, and *not* in the mere abject fear of being or not being able to deal equitably with one's several wives, lies the vast and immeasurable, the primary and essential difference between the consecrating ideals of Monogamy and the debasing realities of Polygamy As man advances in the scale of civilisation he comes to perceive the permanent value and vast potentialities of the Individual Soul, and it is then that he realises that the life-purpose of that Individual Soul, whether male or female, is best and most worthily fulfilled when it is mated to only one other of the opposite sex

Taking this view of the matter, it cannot be gainsaid that between Monogamy and Polygamy

stretches a vast and permanent gulf which no prophetic sanction nor sophistical reasoning can possibly bridge over. It is, therefore, idle to explain away the plain meaning and obvious bearing of the Prophet's teaching on the subject of plurality of wives or to justify his own several marriages on the plea of their being "a matter of charity and hard necessity," entailing on the Prophet "a sacrifice of no light character." [1] We might, however, clear the ground by dismissing without examination the Christian critic's charges of sensuality and self-indulgence in connection with these marriages and admitting without demur that the Prophet was led to contract them from motives primarily, if not purely, benevolent. We might even go further and say that by these marriages he saved many a widow from starvation and worse, and taken altogether they entailed on him "a self-sacrifice of no mean order." When we have said this, we have said all that could be said in defence of these marriages. But the gathered force of all the arguments that could be advanced to justify them does not absolve the Prophet of Islam from the principal ground of reproach of his Christian assailants—namely, that in a prophet Polygamy in every conceivable circumstance is abhorrent and inadmissible, and Mohammed, by practising it in his own person, perpetuated in Islam for all time an institution that was fundamentally antagonistic to the best interests of his own people and

[1] *The Spirit of Islam*, p. 331.

the general progress of humanity at large. It is admitted by all that during the extended lifetime of the noble Khadîja, his first and only true partner in life, the Prophet's home was a shrine of all that is most beautiful and entrancing in married life, and during that period his most captious critic could detect no flaw in his personal life or his moral ideals. Had he after her death remained faithful to her memory and died in the hopes of a reunion that no earthly mischance or temporal limitations could sever, what an example of conjugal love, what a legacy of marital fidelity would he not have left to Islam and the world at large! Let the Moslems think of that when they feel that they are in duty bound to uphold and justify their Prophet's several marriages!

SLAVERY

Like polygamy, Slavery has existed among all nations and, like it, it was an institution recognised by law among the Jews, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Germanic races, and even Christianity tacitly accepted it, since it raised no protest against its principle nor formulated any rule for its suppression On the contrary, finding Slavery a recognised institution of the Empire, it adopted the system wholesale, and made no effort even indirectly to check the evil by improving the status of slaves and thereby bringing about its gradual abolition Under the Civil

Law of the Empire, slaves were mere chattels, and they remained so under the Christian domination. It is true that a slave became free by adopting monachism, but in all other respects Slavery was as rampant under the Christian as under the pagan rule The Digest, compiled under a Christian emperor, fixed the price of slaves, made marriages between slaves illegal, and confirmed various rights of an inhuman and degrading nature possessed by the masters over their slaves In fact, the Church had so far failed to grasp the spirit of the Saviour's teaching that it held slaves for itself and recognised in explicit terms the lawfulness of this dehumanising institution

Slavery, therefore, flourished broadcast and was upheld by the most advanced system of laws known to the ancient world, when Mohammed appeared on the scene His own people, it is true, were as much involved in it as any other, but, from the very commencement of his career, he with his keen eye saw the innate wrong and basic injustice of the institution, and when he came to possess power among them, he exhorted his followers repeatedly in the name of Allah to enfranchise slaves—"than which there was not an act of life more acceptable to their Creator." He promulgated several humane laws for the manumission of slaves and ruled that they should be allowed to purchase their liberty by the wages of their service and, if needs be, sums should be advanced to them from the public treasury for

that purpose [1] The whole tenor of Mohammed's teaching on the subject was to make the masters hold their slaves on terms of the utmost equality with themselves, and he went so far as to enjoin

"And as to your slaves, see that ye feed them as ye feed yourselves, and clothe them as ye clothe yourselves"

What could be more convincing proof of the Prophet's good-will and benevolent intentions towards his fellow-men in bondage than the above emphatic injunction of his to his followers? And yet there have been found people to say that "Islam consecrated slavery," when in reality it strove in every way for its suppression by circumscribing the means of possession within the narrowest possible limits The man who dealt in slaves was declared an outcast of humanity, and to reduce one of the faithful to slavery was forbidden in explicit terms Be it, however, admitted to the lasting shame of Moslem rulers that they have systematically flouted the letter and spirit of the Prophet's commandments and allowed the long-discredited traffic in human bodies and souls to go unchecked in their domains Let us hope that with the modern awakening of Islam the Moslems of the world will awake to the true intent of their great Prophet's plain teaching on the subject, and save his memory from the aspersions cast on it by bringing moral pressure on their rulers to proclaim in unequivocal terms that Slavery is opposed to the spirit of

[1] Sura xxiv 33

their faith and the lasting interests of mankind as a whole

LAWS CIVIL AND CRIMINAL

Taking first the Criminal Laws, they are enacted in the form of penalties for the commission of certain crimes They are fragmentary in character and, judging from the crude nature of the punishments, they obviously embody the customary law and practice as it prevailed among the various tribes of Arabs then existing For instance, a thief for the first offence was to lose a hand, while the relatives of a murdered man had the choice of either killing the murderer or demanding blood-money from him An unchaste woman was to be immured alive or imprisoned for life, while "the whore and the whoremonger were each to be scourged with a hundred stripes "[1] Warfare against Allah and His Apostle was looked upon almost as *lèse-majesté* and punished with impalement or mutilation or banishment

The Civil Laws were still more fragmentary, and were enacted to meet the special requirements of the Prophet in the management of his numerous followers They were at times definite legal orders and at times merely moral counsels. For instance, he enjoined that one's property was not to be expended for mere show and vain display, nor was it to be utilised in bribing witnesses or public functionaries There were

[1] Sura xxiv 2

various positive enactments issued for the equitable inheritance of property, and recommendatory regulations made as to how legacies were to be shared by the beneficiaries, and what part of them was to be left for the support of the poor and the orphan The last-named was an object of particular care and protection in the Islamic Code, and special rules were made in its interest whereby the orphan was to be treated with fairness, its property was to be well looked after and, should it be a girl, suitable marriage was to be arranged for her Although Mohammed commenced his career as a dealer in merchandise, the Koran contains no special rules on trade except the general one of dealing justly with one's customer and taking no unfair advantage of one's fellow-tradesmen There is, however, a positive enactment [1] in the matter of Usury, from which the Faithful are warned on pain of hell-fire to keep away yet, alas, like many other enactments of the Prophet, it is now "more honoured in the breach than in the observance"

Regulations Domestic, Social and Ceremonial

As might be expected, the most important regulation of these is the legislation regarding Marriage "The licence allowed by it between the sexes—at least, in favour of the male sex—

[1] Sura iv 36

is so wide," says Sir William Muir, "that for such as have the means and the desire to take advantage of it, there need be no limit whatever to sexual indulgence The Koran gives the believer permission to have four wives at a time. And he may exchange them, that is, he may divorce them at pleasure, taking others in their stead And, as if this were not licence enough, the divine law permits the believer to consort with all female slaves These he may receive into his harem instead of wives, or in addition to them, and without any limit of number or restraint whatever "[1]

In the foregoing pages we have examined at length the various charges frequently brought against Mohammed for admitting the principle of polygamy in his institutions of Marriage, and found how unfair and untenable most of them were, still, no Moslem will care to deny that the above statement of Sir William Muir is a fairly accurate summary, in theory at least, of the Islamic marriage-code as it is proclaimed in the Koran The sexual freedom, conceded and legalised by it, is indeed such as to make Islam in all truth "the Easy Way." However, there is one redeeming feature And it is that most minute instructions are given as to how the various wives and their nondescript companions of the harem are to be treated, and what strict impartiality coupled with love and tenderness is expected of their lord and protector. Provision

[1] *The Rise and Decline of Islam*, p 31

is made to deal with disobedient and otherwise unsatisfactory wives. They may be beaten and even confined to bring them to a happier frame of mind in consonance with their lord and master's wishes For extreme cases *talaq* is provided for, which is an extremely easy form of divorce, though certain regulations are made to guard the interests of the divorced wife and her children.

In the Regulations, a good deal of attention is given to deportment and the ordinary courtesies and charities of life An all-round demand is made for respect, particularly to one's parents, elders and betters Strict rules are laid down for modest behaviour between men and women The latter are enjoined to cover themselves in a certain mode and are not to go unveiled nor display their ornaments "except to their husbands or their fathers, or their husbands' fathers, or their sons, or their husbands' sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or their slaves, or male domestics who have no natural force, or to children who note not women's nakedness " [1]

There are quite a number of ceremonial regulations of a fragmentary character, chiefly adapted from old Arab customs and supplemented in the matter of forbidden foods from the Jewish Code As in Leviticus, so in the Koran, foods are divided into clean and unclean The terms used are *halāl* and *harām* The former means that which is permitted, and is consequently lawful

[1] Sura xxiv 31

and wholesome; while the latter stands for a that is prohibited, and is consequently unlawful and noxious The principal prohibitions are those of swine's flesh and strong drink Together with wine, drawing of lots by means of arrows and all games of chance are proclaimed ***harām***, and magic in the sense of sorcery is strongly condemned

There is one point in which the Koran went further than the Jewish and Christian scriptures that preceded it, inasmuch as it proclaimed that, in the sight of the Creator, all His creation, human and brute, stood on a footing of absolute equality "And there is not an animal nor a creeping thing upon the earth, nor a feathered creature which flies with wings, but is a people like unto yourselves—which eventually like yourselves shall return unto the Lord" Where, I ask, in the ancient scriptures of any race, has the duty of mankind towards their dumb and neglected fellow-creatures been proclaimed in language at once so terse and luminous, so full of infinite tenderness and solemn meaning as in the above text of the Koran? These precepts of tenderness and love towards all sentient creatures embalmed in the Koran have, alas, like other good things of Islam, not been translated into a common duty of everyday life in the Moslem woi ld to the extent thay might have been.

WARFARE AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

The Moslems, though usually described as having belief in one God, are yet commonly

known to regard the followers of other religions as being *Unbelievers* and, for that reason, to deem "it lawful to kill them—indeed, the murder of an infidel is thought to be a passport to Paradise" [1] To anyone who was even superficially acquainted with the true religion of Mohammed such a bare and stupid summary of the Prophet's teaching on Warfare and Religious Tolerance will appear to be grossly misleading, if not wholly and absolutely wrong And yet there are passages in the Koran, the mere cold detached reading of which would logically lead one to such a bald deduction Take, for instance, that text from the *sura* on *Immunity* which is so frequently and systematically commented on by the critics

"And when the sacred months are passed, kill (literally, fight in the way of God) those who join gods with God wherever ye shall find them, and seize them, besiege them, and lay wait for them with every kind of ambush but if they shall convert, and observe prayer, and pay the obligatory alms, then let them go their way, for Allah is Gracious, Merciful" [2]

Or take the other text which is equally a favourite of the critics

"The only recompense of those who war against God and his Apostle, and study to act corruptly on the earth, shall be that they shall be slain or crucified, or have their alternate hands and feet cut off, or be banished the land this their disgrace in this world, and in the next a great torment shall be theirs—except those who,

[1] A M Pennell's *A Hero of the Afghan Frontier*, p 47.
[2] Sura ix 5.

ere you have them in your power, shall repent; for know Allah is Forgiving, Merciful "[1]

Strangely enough, in the latter *sura* of *The Table* there is a verse which is full of the true spirit of tolerance and good-will for those who are not of his faith and creed Saith the Prophet

"O people of the Book! Be not ye troubled for the Unbelievers verily, they who believe, and the Jews, and the Sabeites, and the Christians—whoever of them believeth in God and in the Last Day, and doth what is Right, on them shall come no fear, neither shall they be put to grief "[2]

The same noble sentiment is repeated in different words in a hundred other passages in the Koran witness, "What, wilt thou force men to believe when belief can come only from Allah? Let there be, therefore, *no compulsion in religion* "[3] But of these passages scattered all through the Koran there are two that are especially worth quoting, as they prove, beyond cavil that Islam does not confine Salvation to the followers of the Prophet alone, as has been so persistently and ignorantly maintained by its critics

"To every one of you have We given a law and a way and if Allah had pleased, He had, be assured, made you all one people But He hath done otherwise, that He might try you in that which He hath severally given unto you wherefore press forward in good works Unto Allah shall ye all one day return, and He will then tell you that concerning which ye dispute now "[4]

[1] Sura v 38, 39
[2] Sura v 72, 73
[3] Sura xi 257
[4] Sura v 55, 56

"Dispute not, therefore, unless in kindly sort, with the people of the Book,—save with such of them as have dealt wrongfully with thee and say ye 'We believe in what hath been sent down to us and hath been sent down to you Our God and your God is One, and to Him are we all in common pledged " [1]

Are there to be found in the Scriptures of other religions texts breathing a catholicity of feeling deeper or propagating a tolerance of beliefs nobler than the above two?

It is, however, true that the Prophet preached —*Jihādan-fi-sabillah* Various and contradictory interpretations have been put on this fateful expression Some, like Koelle and Kremer, have taken it to mean, as if it preached slaughter, rapine, and destruction for the sake of Allah and Islam while others, like Maulana Cheragh Ali and Mirza Abul-Fazl, see in it nothing but a harmless exhortation—"to strive, labour, toil and exert oneself" in the way of Allah Now the famous expression is neither so bloodthirsty nor so bloodless as these good and learned men severally make it out to be Rightly and impartially interpreted, it means to strive, struggle and strike in the Way of Allah Much, therefore, depends on the right interpretation of the phrase, "in the Way of Allah" What is "the Way of Allah"? Fortunately there are several passages in the Koran which, taken together, provide us with a fairly complete answer to this important query

[1] Sura xxix 45

"Fight in the way of Allah: that is, against those who make war against you But do not attack them first, for Allah loves not the aggressor Fight, therefore, against them until there be no more civil discord, and the only worship be that of God but if they desist, then let there be no hostility, save against the wicked "[1]

"O ye who believe Know that Retaliation is enjoined upon you in the matter of the slain But in this Law of Retaliation is your true security for life, O men of understanding! to the intent that ye may fear Allah and guard against evil Were it otherwise, and if Allah had not made this law of repelling some men by others, the world would have gone to badness but Allah is a Lord of Kindness to Creation "[2]

"Why should you not then fight *in the Way of God*, for the weak among men and for women and for children —those who say O Lord, take us out of this city whose people are oppressors"[3]

"Fighting, therefore, is enjoined upon you, and it is assuredly a hateful thing to you But it may be that you hate a thing which is good for you, and it may also be that you love a thing which is bad for you Be assured, God knows what is best for you, and you do not know "

From the above passages it is evident that it is the duty of every able-bodied Moslem to fight, if need arises, in the Way of Allah—that is, in self-defence or on behalf of the weak and the oppressed, or for the redress of wrongs or the enforcement of covenants Let it not be forgotten besides, that to the Moslems self-defence had become a question of self-preservation Surrounded by enemies and traitors, Mohammed

[1] Sura ii 186, 189 [2] Sura ii 173, 175

with his followers would have inevitably perished but for the swords in their hands They had, therefore, either to submit to be slaughtered or fight when they were attacked Of the two, Mohammed chose the latter alternative, but he made it very clear to his followers that they were to draw their swords and defend themselves only "when the Infidels broke their oaths of alliance and attacked them" Nay more, he even went further and made the following stirring appeal to their better mind and nobler nature

> "If ye make reprisals, then make them to the same extent that ye were injured but if ye can endure patiently, best will it be for the patiently enduring Endure then with patience But thy patient endurance must be sought in none but God And be not grieved about the Infidels, nor be troubled at their devices but follow thou the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and with kindly warning, and dispute with the Infidels in the kindliest manner For God knoweth best those who stray from His way and those who have yielded to His guidance, and God, be assured, is with those who fear Him and do good works"[1]

This noble appeal of the Prophet for greater patience and kindlier ways towards the Unbelievers, and his proclaimed Tolerance of all creeds and Charity towards all men, have been skilfully slurred over by the interested zeal of rival religionists or, worse still, utterly perverted by the insane bigotry and dynastic cupidity of his own venal followers

[1] Sura xvi 126–128

HUMAN BROTHERHOOD.

However much Islam may have been perverted by the bigotry and cupidity of its own followers in the matter of *jihādan-fi-sabillah*, or misunderstood by the interested zeal of rival religionists in the matter of religious tolerance, it cannot be gainsaid that within his own fold Mohammed was the first to practise, as he was undoubtedly the first to grasp, the true intent and spirit of Christ's great teaching about the equality of man in the sight of God. "Ye People of the Lord, hearken unto my words," said the Prophet in that last great sermon of his, every word of which has burnt into the soul of Islam ever since the prophetic lips gave utterance to it, "for I know not whether after this year I shall ever be amongst you here again. Know that every Moslem is the brother of every other Moslem. All of you are equal in the eye of heaven. For ye are but the pre-ordained units of one vast ever-living Brotherhood!" It was on this grand note of the Brotherhood of Islam that the Prophet closed his sermon, completed his message, and ended his mission to mankind. For to him all distinctions of race or colour, all divisions, social or religious, were utterly abhorrent. Consequently, throughout his chequered life, he mixed freely and lived in happy harmony with all without reserve or constraint of any kind, whether in the field or the guest-chamber, in the tent or the castle, in the mosque or the market-place.

Likewise all who worthily bear his name and truly profess his faith ought to follow and do follow his great example and mix freely and live in happy harmony with all and sundry, irrespective of their rank and wealth The first Muezzin of Islam was an Ethiopian slave, called Bilal, and likewise the first king of Delhi and the founder of the Islamic Empire in India was a Persian slave, by name Kutbuddîn These instances manifest the true democratic spirit that lies at the core of Islam—a spirit which will have to be jealously guarded and sedulously nurtured if the Future of Islam is to reflect some of the Glories of its Past

THE FUTURE OF ISLAM

"To-morrow, perhaps that world, to-day so careless and incredulous, will believe in you and listen to you with avidity Onward, therefore, in faith, and fear not! That which Mohammed did, Mohammedans surely can do Believe and act Action is the word of Allah passive thought is but its shadow

After Mazzini

CHAPTER VIII

THE FUTURE OF ISLAM

THE reader who has gone through the foregoing seven chapters without prejudice and prepossessions cannot have failed to notice that, taken all in all, nothing could be simpler or more in keeping with the swelling tide of human thought than the teachings of the Arabian Prophet In them no theory is propounded to imprison the mind of man, nor any law promulgated to keep enchained the conscience of advancing humanity. The few legal principles the Prophet enunciated and the fewer rules of religious practice he enjoined were designed chiefly to correct patent evils and maintain discipline and uniformity, so necessary at all stages of social and religious progress But neither the rules nor the principles were ever rigidly applied, nor were they by any means of an inflexible character On the contrary, the ease with which Islamic precepts and principles could mould themselves to the varying requirements of different countries and nations was the outstanding feature of the early history of Islam and the real cause of its phenomenal growth in those centuries But this wonderful adaptability of Islam, alas, carried within it the seed of its own undoing For those precepts and

principles that so readily lent themselves to re-adjustment to meet local conditions, once they had been re-adjusted, soon got encrusted with inane formulas, and in the course of time became so fossilised that they ultimately came to possess only local and historic significance It is because some of the Christian writers on Islam have failed to grasp this turn of events in Moslem History that they complain of "the harshness and inadaptability of Islam to present modes of thought and manners" But a little patient inquiry into the historic value of laws and precepts, a little more fairness in the examination of undisputed facts and traditions, would evince the temporary and local character of such tenets and precepts as are incapable of being harmonised with the requirements or the sentiments or even the prejudices of our own times

In the first place, it must be remembered that our relations with our Creator are primarily matters of conscience, as our relations with our fellow-men are necessarily matters of positive rules And what higher sanction could be found for the enforcement of the relative duties of man to man than the sanction of religion? And religion in the East, as we said before, is not a matter of hebdomadal flocking into churches and chapels, nor a subject of solemn declamation by paid preachers It is there—the Rule of Life and of all rules the most exacting and the least accommodative Religion worthy of the name ought to act rather as an impelling force than a

compelling necessity, thereby leading humanity by a secret under-current to that state of perfection and self-realisation which is the end of existence And it has been admitted even by its Christian expounders that Islam being an eclectic religion, its distinguishing feature is that it has imbibed from all ethnic and catholic religions just such broad and lasting characteristics as are based on reason and the moral intuition of man.[1]

Coming to the more practical side of Islam, we find that the Prophet denounced in no uncertain terms all manner of impurity, every form of hypocrisy and each aspect of ungodliness, and in a thousand varied ways proclaimed the value of truth, the need of charity and the preciousness of brotherly love "How do you suppose," he questioned a disciple of his, "God will know you when you approach Him? By your love of your children, of your kin, of your neighbours, and of your fellow-creatures" It is this practical character of the religion of Mohammed that has such an abiding influence on the common relations of mankind In "the trivial round and common task" of daily life, we do not go to exceptional minds to appraise the value of a religion We search rather among the masses to understand its true character And the questions we put about a religion are What power does it wield over them? Does it give them a clear guidance in the matter of right and wrong? Does it lift

[1] Clarke's *Ten Great Religions*, ch 1.

them out of the mire of indolence and despondency in which all over the world it is the common fate of the masses to sink? The Islamic regions of the Old World with their 250,000,000 followers furnish the best answer to these varied queries That it did not ignore human nature in all its multifarious phases nor entangle itself in the tortuous by-ways outside the realms of the actual and the practical, is sufficiently evidenced by the appeal it makes alike to the untutored Negro and the cultured Turk, to the simple-minded South Sea Islander and the subtle and highly sensitive Persian

Yet, alas for the latter-day professors of Islam, this grand old religion of Mohammed has of more recent times fallen on evil days As in the Christian lands, so also in the Islamic, the practice of religion has given place to the mockery of profession, lazy literalism has usurped the functions of faithful work and empty ceremonialism has assumed the garb of a devotional spirit And to cap it all, the blight of Patristicism has secretly crept in and ruined the blossom of true religion

With great force has a well-known Christian scholar pointed out the distinction between religion and theology, and the evils which overtook the Christian Church when it confused the two and allowed the latter to supplant the former [1] The same has happened in Islam The mixing up of dead theology with living religion has exter-

[1] Prof Momerie in his *Defects of Modern Christianity.*

minated enthusiasm and earnestness among the Islamic masses, and their beautiful old pure-hearted devotion to Allah and His Prophet is now for all practical purposes reduced to mere interested worship of the Pir and his Idgah Perhaps, when I say this, I am putting the matter too strongly, but not, I think, much too strongly Anyhow, it will not be denied that the lives and conduct of a large number of Moslems at the present day are governed not so much by the precepts of the Prophet or the teachings of the Koran as by the opinions of their *imâms* and *mujtahids* and the theories evolved from the long string of *hadith* (traditions), *ijma* (consensus of opinion), and *qiyās* (inference by analogy) These hadith, ijma and qiyās and those imâms and mujtahids, I dare say, have their proper place and uses in the Islamic scheme of things But when the latter dare "to sit in Moses' seat" and the former threaten to replace "the Kitab divine," it is then that they become a danger and a curse to Islam Like the Christian ecclesiastics of old, many of these imâms and mujtahids were the vassals and dependents of despotic rulers whose demands were of first consideration with them, and when these demands of the despots could not be made to fit in with the precepts of the Prophet — why, so much the worse for the precepts! Canons were straightway invented, theories gaily started, traditions secretly discovered and interpretations boldly put upon the Prophet's words utterly subversive of their true

intent. And hence it is that many of the rules and regulations which now govern the conscience and impulse of the many professors of Islam hardly find an echo in the express and positive declarations in the Koran, and are for the most part the relics of the lego-religious books with which the Islamic world was flooded in the later centuries. An English writer puts the whole matter in a nutshell when he says: "Just as the Hebrews deposed their Pentateuch in favour of the Talmud, so the Moslems have abolished the Koran in favour of the Traditions and Decisions of the Learned."

The result of all this misadventure is that the Moslems of the present day, instead of taking to the narrow and difficult path indicated by the Prophet, of "right-doing and right-thinking," and "of striving to excel in good works and seeking to please the Lord," have allowed themselves to stray into the easy by-ways of rank opportunism and outward observance or, worse still, into the blind alleys of doing nothing and thinking nothing. It was but natural that the early disciples, oblivious of the world-wide bearing of the Master's teachings, should mix up the temporary with the permanent, the particular with the universal, and that in their great admiration and enthusiasm for him should stereotype his ordinary mode of life, crystallise the passing incidents of a chequered career and hug to their hearts rules and regulations enunciated to meet the exigencies of the day in an infant society.

All this was but natural and to be expected. But for the Moslems to maintain for that reason that their great teacher—the man who had proclaimed that the universe was governed by law and that the law of the universe was progressive development—ever contemplated that those injunctions called forth by the passing necessities of a desert-bound people should be immutable to the end of Time and prove valid to the ends of the earth—to maintain this is to betray a deplorable misunderstanding of the Prophet and of the cause he had come to advance in the world The Master with his prophetic vision clearly foresaw the danger that lay ahead of his teaching, and so foretold that a time would come when the temporary and the accidental regulations would have to be differentiated from the permanent and the general "Ye are in an age," he warned them, "in which if ye abandon one-tenth of what is enjoined, ye will be ruined After this, a time will come when he who shall observe but one-tenth of what is now commanded will be redeemed and blessed" But it was in the famous case of Muâz that the Prophet unmistakably showed how alive he was to the manifold necessities of the world at large, with its ever-changing social conditions and moral ideals, and to the likelihood that the revelations vouchsafed to him might not meet all possible contingencies in all climes and in every age When on the eve of his departure to take up the governorship of Yemen, Muâz came to bid good-bye to the

Prophet, the latter asked "Tell me, Muâz, by what rule or principle would you be guided in your administration of Yemen" "By the Law of the Koran, Sire," replied Muâz "But what if in a difficult situation you found no direction in the Revelations?" "In that case," answered Muâz, "I will act according to the example of my Prophet" "But what if that again fails you?" "I do trust, Sire, such a contingency will never arise," said Muâz, "but if it does, well, I will exercise my own judgment" The Prophet, it is said, was much impressed by this answer of his disciple, which he thereupon commended to all his followers

Those last six words of Muâz might well be carved in letters of gold on the entrance archway of every mosque in Islam! There they would stand to remind the Moslem, every time he entered the consecrated grounds, of the sacred duty he owed to Allah and the Prophet It is because the modern Moslem has long neglected to perform this sacred duty of exercising his right of Private Judgment that the present stagnation of the Mussulman communities all over the world might largely be attributed And unless he takes his courage in both hands and refuses to let his conscience and intelligence lie under the yoke of the early Legists and of the later Schoolmen with their baleful creed—namely, that private opinion in matters of religion is sinful in itself, and that a faithful follower of the Prophet must of necessity belong to one or the

other of the Schools established by them ten centuries ago—there is not much hope that the Future of Islam will shine forth in any degree commensurate with its great past

A well-known critic and author,[1] reviewing a recently published work[2] on Islam, remarks "The significant and, indeed, immensely pregnant fact to-day is the Reformation of Islam" He then traces its general likeness to the Protestant Reformation and, noticing a certain correspondence between the Christian sect of Hussites and the Islamic tribe of Wahabites, comes to the conclusion that the Wahabism which inspired the Babism of Persia and paved the way for that veiled but powerful Senussi fraternity of North Africa, was a movement strictly analogous to the Puritan movement of the Middle Ages, with its devotion to primitive faith, strict morality and iconoclastic attitude towards Art

It is true that, broadly speaking, the evolution of Christianity and that of Islam have, at an interval of some six centuries, run a remarkably parallel course But I doubt if that mere broad parallelism of development would justify us in saying that "the pregnant fact of Islam of to-day is the Reformation of Islam," or in tracing the germs of that Reformation in Wahabite and analogous movements For one thing the germ of the Protestant Reformation lay not so much in the reforming zeal of the Hussites nor in the

[1] Havelock Ellis

[2] Lothrop Stoddard's *New World of Islam*

puritanical frenzy of the Lollards, as in the recovery of Classical learning and the consequent Revival of Literature and Art in Europe It was the Renaissance that, really speaking, blazed the path and laid the foundation of the Reformation

Since the eruption of the Barbarian tribes into the Roman provinces, no change had come to pass in Europe at all comparable to that which followed the diffusion of the New Learning in the latter half of the fifteenth century Enchanted by the beauty and grace of the Classical models of art and poetry, more particularly those of the Greeks, men came to regard with aversion and contempt all that had been done or produced from the days of Trajan to those of Pope Nicholas V From all that was old and solemn or that seemed to savour of feudalism and monkery, people turned away with positive revulsion They were content to gratify their tastes and their senses, caring little for worship, less for doctrine Their ideas and ambitions were no longer such as had made their forefathers crusaders and ascetics, nor was their imagination possessed by hopes and sentiments which had inspired the genius of Dante Not that they revolted against the Church, but they had no enthusiasm for her, for their enthusiasm was wholly absorbed by whatever was fresh and graceful, intelligible and reasonable Whether we call this spirit analytical or sceptical, rationalistic or individualistic, it was the Spirit of the Renaissance and it was the spirit which ushered in the Reforma-

tion For instance, the Renaissance proclaimed in general terms the principle of Individuality, and the Reformation only confirmed it when it itself put forth the doctrine of Private Judgment in matters spiritual It maintained that the individual spirit, though it never ceased to mirror itself in the World-Spirit, had nevertheless an independent existence of itself as a centre of self-issuing forces Consequently, Truth, religious or otherwise, was no longer truth to the soul until it was by the soul recognised, and in some measure even re-created The Reformation was, therefore, in one sense and in a deep sense the pure outcome of forces liberated by the Renaissance, without which it could only have ended in a mere re-examination and re-adjustment of the old ecclesiastical machinery and not in a complete re-forming and re-creation of it as had actually been the case If we are, therefore, to derive one sure lesson from the remarkable parallelism which Mr Havelock Ellis traces between the evolution of Christianity and that of Islam, it would be that there could be no Islamic Reformation, in the full and real sense of the term, unless its path was blazed by the torch of an Islamic Renaissance

And Islam ought to find no difficulty in blazing such a path For its Prophet's devotion to knowledge and science was the feature that most distinguished him from all other teachers Knowledge was almost a passion with him He would often say that "the ink of the scholar was more than the blood of the martyr," and that "one

hour's meditation on the work of the Creator was better than seventy years of prayer", and he repeatedly impressed upon his disciples the necessity of seeking for knowledge "even unto China" Science and Literature possessed no votary among the pre-Islamite Arabs at all comparable to the Prophet It was this passion and enthusiasm of his that gave a new impulse to the awakened energies of the race and sowed the seeds of a plant of learning which was eventually to blossom forth into the world-renowned universities of Bagdad and Salerno, Cairo and Cordova Speaking of the last-named a famous French author is led to remark

> "The taste for science and literature had by the tenth century established in this privileged corner of the world, a toleration of which modern times hardly offer us an example Christians, Jews, and Mussulmans spoke in the same tongue, sang the same songs, participated in the same literary and scientific studies All the barriers which separated the various peoples were effaced all worked with one aim and one object for the furtherance of a common civilisation and common culture The mosques of Cordova, where the students could be counted by thousands, became the active centres of philosophical and scientific studies" [1]

What more impartial testimony could be cited to demonstrate the breadth of outlook and nobility of aim of the Islamic mind, what more weighty evidence adduced to prove how profoundly she had at heart and how disinterestedly she pursued the cause of Culture and Civilisation

[1] Renan's *Averroès et l'Averroisme*, p 4

than this splendid avowal of Renan? And Cordova was by no means an isolated instance, but the type and pattern of the wonderful spirit which in her palmy days animated Islam throughout her widely-extended domain And the world still possesses and closely guards the marvellous fruit of her imagination in those immortal Tales of Arabian Nights, of her philosophy in the sublime speculations of Hafiz and Omar Khayyám, of her poetic fervour in the incomparable epic of Firdoushi, and of her artistic genius in that flower and crown of human architecture, the peerless Taj Mahal of Agra It may be, alas, that Islam is not destined to outrival these matchless products of her own genius! But no destiny whatever can prevent her from living up to them save her own inertia and want of ambition And one sure way of living up to her immortal past is to bring about the Revival of her Ancient Culture and Learning

There is another point the sons of Islam will have particularly to bear in mind if they wish to get out of her all the good that is in her and maintain whatever prestige and influence she still possesses in the world at large And the point is that they must not take fright at their own shadows, but must unflinchingly stand by their creed, nor fall a ready victim to the common temptation of reading their wishes about Islam into the facts of Islam Of the former the word Islam itself is a significant instance In Chapter III we have spoken at great length to

demonstrate how its leading exponents jib at accepting the full contents of the word, and how even a recognised authority like Syed Ameer Ali, fearing the logical sequence of the full import and bearing of the term, unworthily attempts to explain it away in a half-assertive, half-apologetic vein The same great authority again furnishes an example of a notable Moslem yielding to the common temptation of reading one's wishes about Islam into the facts of Islam As we noticed in the foregoing chapter, Mr Ameer Ali, discussing the question of polygamy, observes that polygamy is opposed to the teaching of Mohammed, and that for his own part he looks upon it in the present phase of things as an adulterous connection and as contrary to the spirit of Islam [1] If this were so, what opinion are we to have of a prophet who barefacedly takes to polygamy, contrary to the spirit of his own faith? Of what worth is the teaching when the teacher himself openly flouts his own teaching? What a pass we bring matters to when we thus thoughtlessly try to read our wishes into facts! And how needlessly we lower the great name and high character of the Prophet when to meet our own whims we stupidly seek to thrust upon him ideas and principles he never possessed, never professed and never propounded!

There is yet another temptation into which the sons of Islam are very apt to fall In their great love and veneration for the Prophet, they

[1] *The Spirit of Islam*, pp 327, 365

deem it their solemn duty to extol his character and exalt his personality to the full measure of their capacity for praise and command of language In their great enthusiasm for their Prophet, 'which is both natural and laudable, they are often carried away beyond the bounds of reason and facts, with the inevitable consequence that those outside the fold are left as unimpressed as unconvinced, while those inside the fold are apt to take too readily to the congenial task of basking in the reflected glory of their master On this point, the great betrayers of Islam, unfortunately, are those great expounders of her from whom the greatest sanity and impartiality of judgment might justly have been expected Witness the following from *The Spirit of Islam*

"The greatest Reformer the world has ever produced was Mohammed The greatest upholder of the sovereignty of Reason was Mohammed The work of Jesus was left unfinished It was reserved for Mohammed to systematise the laws of morality In the fact of the whole work being achieved in his own lifetime lies the distinctive *superiority* of Mohammed over the prophets, sages, and philosophers of other times and other countries Jesus, Moses, Zoroaster, Sakya-Muni, Plato, all had their notions of realms of God, their republics, their ideas, through which degraded humanity was to be elevated into a new moral life all had departed from this world with their aspirations *un*fulfilled, their bright visions *un*realised, or had bequeathed the task of elevating their fellow-men to sanguinary disciples or monarch-pupils It was reserved for Mohammed to fulfil his mission, and *that of his predecessors* So ended a life consecrated, from

first to last, to the service of God and humanity Is there another to be compared to this, with all its trials and temptations? Is there another which has stood the fire of the world, and came out so unscathed?"[1]

Why make these brave interrogations? Why issue this unnecessary challenge? How does it add to the fame of Mohammed or advance the cause of Islam? Such uncalled-for challenges and odious comparisons only provoke those outside the Islamic fold to pick holes in the Prophet's character and creed Forster, for instance, in his book[2] calls Mohammedanism "a false and spurious revelation," and "a baleful superstition," and its author "an impostor, earthly, sensual, devilish beyond even the licence of his own licentious creed"

Such rank abuse and mutual recriminations are utterly unworthy and wholly inexcusable, especially at the present juncture of events when, in some of the most populous parts of the world, the Moslem and the Christian have to live side by side and together work out their common destiny It is a time essentially for mutual tolerance of each other's diverging aims and sympathetic interest in each other's common pursuits, and not for needless embitterment of religious feelings and belittling of each other's prophets There is nothing in the world so wrong but that the spirit of humanity, which is as much the spirit of Christ as of Mohammed, may make

[1] Pages 211, 219, 285
[2] *Mohammedanism Unveiled*

it, if not right, at least possible to be borne without too much bitterness of heart. But if such a spirit is to be cultivated in Islam, its exponents and expounders will have of set purpose to keep clear of all temptations of claiming a kind of "superiority" for their Prophet by making provocative and unconvincing comparisons with his past compeers Such methods are not very helpful nor are they conducive to giving real eminence to a man, much less to a prophet. A prophet, like any other man, if he is really great, must be great in his own self and in his own sphere of work, and stands in no need of fictitious and biased comparisons with others and their work to be counted great And Mohammed *was* great in his own self and in his own sphere of work And so were the other Prophets The Prophets, be it remembered, are the products of the spiritual necessities of their age, and are no mere accidents, nor are their lives unconnected episodes in the history of the world Each of them, consequently, stood supreme in the particular period of time which he was sent down to reclaim and enlighten, guide and set a standard to And each without exception fulfilled his mission just as well as Mohammed did, and like him completed his earthly task as fully as it was possible for him to do within the immediate limitations and despite the insuperable obstacles which hedged in his destiny This is the only legitimate conclusion we can come to from taking an unbiased and comprehensive view of things

and reading the life-history of each of these great souls with an open mind and a more discerning eye Let the Moslems, therefore, once for all give up the foolish notion which overweening conceit and easy complacency have so long bred in them—namely, of believing that all other Prophets had left their work *un*completed and their missions *un*fulfilled, and "it was reserved for Mohammed to fulfil not only his own mission, but that of his predecessors "[1]

The Present is the seed-time of the Future Vast forces, religious and otherwise, have been unchained by the late War in all Islamic lands These forces, if quickly harnessed, carefully conserved, and appropriately utilised, might change the whole Future of Islam In the Khalifate they have one such transmuting force which, if used honestly and temperately, might work as a potent lever to lift Islam from its present inert and infructuous recumbency of centuries to the sunlit heights of a redeeming future But it will have to be worked up, as we said above, honestly and temperately, if it is to bear fruit and not be discredited by the world at large The Khalifate is a great cause and a splendid rallying-point, but no impartial exponent of Islam can wink at the fact that it is not and never has been a vital point in the religion of Mohammed This fact must be boldly and squarely faced, if the great cause is not to degenerate into a mere vapid cry giving vent to long-suppressed religious fana-

[1] *The Spirit of Islam*, p 211

ticism and racial hatred. With vast numbers of Mussulmans it is no doubt an acknowledged item of Islamic Creed, but it is not in itself a vital point of Mohammedanism. What I mean is that no Mussulman can be a good Moslem and a worthy disciple of Mohammed who does not believe, for instance, in daily Prayers or the Prophets, in the Ramazān Fast or the Last Judgment, but any Mussulman could be a good Moslem and a worthy disciple of the Prophet quite irrespective of his belief or disbelief in the Khalifate, as millions of Shiahs in Persia and elsewhere are. The great thing, therefore, is to see that we do not mix up the vital things of Islam with the non-vital, and while standing fast by the former in all circumstances whatever, leave a broad margin in the case of the latter and make it largely a question of choice and temperament Moreover, we shall have to search out by a diligent and deliberate effort of meditative thought the basic qualities of Islam and hold fast to them when once found Take, for instance, those qualities of Simplicity and Directness which were such distinguishing features of Islam at the commencement and to which she primarily owes the wonderful hold she has in after times retained on the heart and imagination of the countless millions of her followers all over the world The introduction of the slightest complexity in the Prophet's conception of God and His ways, or the tolerance of the minutest deflection from the direct and immediate approach to that conception, would

inevitably undermine and eventually kill both the letter and spirit of Islam.

But there is another reason besides why Simplicity and Directness must be the watchwords of Islam Mohammed, it must be remembered, was the first of the Prophets to bring religion mainly within the bounds of Reason and Commonsense As such he abhorred all attempts at mysticism, disclaimed every power of wonder-working, and left nothing unsaid or undone that would redeem common humanity from its besetting sins of blind credulity and lazy gullibility And there are no more formidable foes of mysticism and human credulity than Simplicity and Directness These, consequently, will have to be sedulously cultivated if the Islam of the Future is to bear aloft the torch of Reason and walk along the path of Commonsense indicated by its great Founder

But above all, the secret of the astonishing success of the Medina Mission lay in the note it struck in the heart of man It was the old, old note—the Human Note And it is a note which never palls and never fails of its purpose, no matter how frequently or how insistently it is struck. On the contrary, the more frequently and insistently it is struck, the deeper it sinks and the longer it lives in our being And it is the dominant note in Islam This is as it should be For from first to last Mohammed's life is purely and intensely human, and Islam in consequence is in this as in everything else but a pure reflex of its

great exemplar and originator Not that other religions before Islam, when laying down precepts and inculcating duties, ignored human nature, but they did not seem to take as sufficiently into their calculations its irrepressible force nor make as sufficient an allowance for its many needs and wide limitations as Islam did. Consequently, while Islam set up ideals and preached moral principles that were humanly attainable, and made for a goal that was well within the reach of its faithful followers, other religions aimed at ideals and upheld moral principles that were frankly unrealisable, as they set up a goal which receded the further, the nearer their adherents advanced towards it Their motto was—"*Ad Astra*," Islam's—"*Ad Rem*" In other words, with those—the glory of life lay *not* in what it achieved, but in what it aspired to with Islam—the glory of life lies *not* in what it futilely aspires to, but in what it actually achieves. There is, therefore, a clear and marked distinction between a religion of the restrictedly humanistic kind, with frankly mundane ideals, and a religion which aims at heights humanly unattainable and glories in the preservation and triumph of the Spirit Life—between a religion, for instance, like Islam which supports man in his narrow finite outlook and promises permanent happiness to him without enacting or even expecting any radical change in his nature, and a religion like Christianity which offers a unique revelation and a totally new valuation of man's spiritual life, and

aims at radically changing his whole nature It would be idle to say this religion is right and that religion is wrong, or to speak of the "superiority" of the one side over the other, as most of the Christian and Moslem writers have been doing since the birth of Islam Taking a comprehensive view of the matter, we might make a broad statement that each has what the other has not, as each completes and is completed by the other and the use and advancement of both depends on each side primarily keeping true to its own ideals, and then giving the utmost possible latitude to the opposite side for the fulfilment of its own ideals in its own way

Be this as it may, the Future of Islam is bright, though passing clouds may for the time being cast gloomy shadows athwart the fair prospect The Prophet who could evoke the heroic devotion of Ali, the unsurpassed purity of Fatima, the staunch fidelity of Hossain, the patience and piety of Mûsa, and the ineffable meekness of Jâfar the Sâdik, surely had a personality which could inspire every type of heroic manhood and the religion which could produce men like Akbar, Avicenna and Alhazen, Ibn-Sîna and Ibn-Khâldûn, Hafiz and Jellâluddin Rûmi, Hârun-al-Raschild and Mustapha Kemal Pasha, assuredly contains within itself every element of hopefulness! The Moslems of the world are the rightful heirs of this galaxy of masterful minds and faithful hearts If they would but draw inspiration from these immortal spirits, and grasp

the full significance of the great inheritance they have derived from them, they would not only ensure the Future of Islam but help to spread the Message that was delivered to a soul-sick seeker after divine knowledge on the star-lit heights of Mount Hira thirteen centuries ago—that great Message of the Desert—

THE MESSAGE OF MOHAMMED

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